

THE PINK

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65p

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Daily Echo

Cherries beat Pompey – page 4

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Eight-page international rugby pullout inside

Forster: Euro 2016 not a priority for me

ENGLAND MUST WAIT!

FRASER Forster insists that representing England at Euro 2016 is not among his priorities despite hitting outstanding form since his return from long-term injury.

The Saints goalkeeper has helped

Ronald Koeman's side to three straight Premier League victories, keeping successive clean-sheets in victories over Watford, West Brom and Manchester United, *writes PETER HOWARD.*

The 27-year-old's return from nearly ten months out has coincided with an upturn in Saints' form.

Continued on page 4



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FA CUP FOURTH ROUND



Tom Carroll scores the fourth goal for Tottenham Hotspur

Spurs cruise to cup victory

NACER Chadli scored twice as Tottenham cruised into the FA Cup fifth round with a 4-1 win at Colchester.

Chadli has now scored four goals in three games, while Eric Dier and Tom Carroll were also on target as Spurs won a fourth straight game.

Ben Davies' own goal was a mere consolation for League One's bottom club, whose chances were dealt a significant blow after a sickening clash of heads in the second minute.

Alex Wynter was treated by both medical teams before he was carried off on a stretcher and taken to hospital after colliding with team-mate Tom Eastman.

He had lost consciousness, but Colchester later reported he was sitting up in hospital, under observation.

Eastman left the field for treatment and returned with a head bandage, but was soon substituted. Questions may be raised on football's head injury protocols.

Harry Kane had immediately signalled for the game to be stopped, rather than try to capitalise on the mix-up which led to the incident.

The lengthy delay and the two enforced substitutions of Colchester's centre-backs appeared to punctuate any sense of optimism for the hosts.

United's only three wins had come in the FA Cup since their last League One win on October 20.

Defeats of Wealdstone, Altrincham and Charlton had provided some respite from a 14-match winless sequence in the league, but Spurs were on form and swiftly on top.

Tottenham should have gone ahead when Kane played in Christian Eriksen, but he lifted the ball off target.

Moments later Chadli opened the scoring, firing in from the right after finding space.

Kane fired into the side-netting and had a header saved by Jake Kean.

It appeared to be only a matter of time before Kane scored, but he was next stopped in his tracks by substitute Frankie Kent, once of Arsenal.

Erik Lamela prodded wide in the opening skirmishes of the second half and then cut inside before shooting off target.

Another opportunity for Spurs' second came when Kane darted down the left and crossed for Chadli, who turned, had time to pick his spot, but fired left-footed against the bar.

The missed chances did not prove costly, though, as Dier's effort from long range doubled the advantage. The strike took a wicked deflection, which wrong-footed Kean.

Spurs boss Mauricio Pochettino was content enough to take off Kane, with Tuesday's Premier League clash at Norwich in mind.

There was a moment of alarm for



Tottenham Hotspur's Nacer Chadli celebrates scoring his side's third goal

Spurs as Colchester substitute Marvin Sordell surged through and beat Michel Vorm with a shot which hit the foot of a post and went clear.

United might have been within one, but soon Spurs were three ahead as Kieran Trippier's cross was headed

in by Chadli.

Colchester got the goal their endeavours deserved when Gavin Massey's shot came back off the post and went in off Davies.

But Chadli turned provider soon after, crossing in for Carroll to tap in.

United are confident again...

LOUIS van Gaal believes Manchester United have their confidence back after the Dutchman kept alive his dream of winning the FA Cup with victory at Derby.

Van Gaal and his team have been heavily criticised this season and arrived in the east midlands under heavy pressure and intense scrutiny after months of indifferent results, uninspiring performances and reports - denied by the Dutchman - that he offered to quit after last weekend's home defeat by Southampton.

It was against Championship opposition, but United looked, for much of the game, something resembling the attacking, swashbuckling side we have become accustomed to over many years, with Anthony Martial providing the flair.

The young Frenchman laid on goals for Wayne Rooney and Juan Mata, with Daley Blind also scoring for United in between.

United were unnerved by a Derby equaliser from George Thorne just before half-time, but it was comfortable in the end for the 11-time winners of the FA Cup.

"I'm very happy. The result and the performance was good. The confidence is back," said the Dutchman.

"It was maybe better than we had trained. We played at the right time against the resistance of Derby. We gave their goal away but at half-time I said that it was a good performance, keep it up and we will win. And we did."

"The Premier League is very important but the FA Cup is the greatest cup in England with a long and important history."

"We haven't won it for a long time so we dream of it. But after two wins you can't say that we will win it."

It remains to be seen whether a run in the FA Cup will protect Van Gaal the way it once did a famous predecessor at Old Trafford but reaching the fifth round on Friday night certainly allowed the United boss to breathe a little easier.

And the 64-year-old remains confident he still has the faith of United's hierarchy.

He said: "It is not a question of one match. It is difficult to understand, but it is a process. It is a period of three years."



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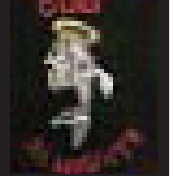
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Adam Rant



The week's big talking points
with ADAM LEITCH

United need much better strategy

Saints deserved their victory at Old Trafford

IT REALLY took some seeing to believe.

Manchester United's fall from grace has been about as spectacular as you could imagine.

While Chelsea have obviously struggled this season, United's woes seem all the more remarkable as their decline has been steady over a period of time.

Whereas Chelsea will get back on track with a new manager in the summer, you have to wonder where United go from here, as there is so much work to do to return them to their superpower status.

Take nothing away from Saints with their victory at Old Trafford last weekend – they deserved it.

They played sensibly, making themselves very hard to break down.

It didn't make for a classic match but it did what it was intended to, shut United out, therefore turning the crowd and upping the pressure.

United were unable to cope with it, and eventually Charlie Austin popped up with the winner.

Having seen United on TV, read and heard so much about them and their struggles, it still was almost jaw-dropping to see in the flesh just how far they had fallen.

It was probably the dramatic settings of Old Trafford that framed it perfectly.

Here you had this mega stadium, a symbol of all things modern day football, packed with some 75,000 fans coming along for a day out.

It conjures up all those old memories of covering Saints games there during Alex Ferguson's time in charge.

United were renowned for their attacking football, had some terrific players, and there was a huge fear factor for visiting sides.

You never really questioned whether Saints could get anything from a game there, and generally felt if they lost by less than three it would be an acceptable result.

Now that intimidation level has gone, the fear factor totally disappeared.

The quality of players on show for United is so inferior to what they had in the past it is almost beyond belief. They are so far short of the quality required for where they aspire to be.

They have a squad which is dominated by mediocre top-flight footballers.



Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal leaves the field dejected after the Premier League defeat to Saints

No disrespect, but much of the squad you could imagine being in the West Brom ranks. A mid-table side, with just a few bits of gold dust sprinkled in there.

Initially you feel some sympathy with Louis van Gaal.

He didn't inherit much to speak of, and nor did David Moyes, such was the perfect timing of Ferguson's exit as the decline was inevitably coming.

And the reason he plays such dull and defensive football is that it's their best chance of getting points.

Of course, all that disappears when you consider they have spent £250 million on assembling that squad.

It's quite staggering just how much money they have wasted.

What was wrong with Ferguson's policy of United snapping up the best talent in the Premier League, and then adding the odd top foreign capture here and there?

Now a greater proportion of these players are coming from the Dutch league, the French league and such like with no real idea of whether

they can adapt to English football, but all of them for top dollar.

You only need somewhat of a struggle and it's obvious which way it will go.

United have to stick with it until the summer and then make the change managerially.

They will also have to accept they have blown most of that money, and will have to spend big again.

This time though they will have to have a much better strategy if the whole thing is not to keep repeating.

Give them a chance

ONLY England could manage to beat South Africa in their own backyard in a Test series and yet still return home with questions hanging over them.

There have been some truly outstanding individual moments, and yet the doubts remain over a number of positions in the team, not least the top order.

Alex Hales is most in the firing-line now, but England will surely have to stick with this side for at least a couple of games and give them a chance.

We have seen a lot of fishing around for the solutions everybody wants, but the policy has to be to give players a bit of time to settle in and not to judge too hastily.

That England ended the series on such a lacklustre defeat was also disappointing.

It just hands back so much of the momentum they had built up, and that is a vital part of top-level sport.

With Sri Lanka and Pakistan to visit this summer, England have plenty of reason for optimism, but there are fine margins between success and failure that they have to get right.



Alex Hales

Adebayor a gamble

CRYSTAL Palace have signed Emmanuel Adebayor, which is certainly an interesting move, but if anybody can pull it off it's Alan Pardew.

Adebayor is unlikely to be a long term fix to their striker problem, but as a short term measure there is little doubting his talent. It's his mentality that is constantly under scrutiny.

Pardew is one of those managers who has a handy knack of being able to channel players like that, at least for a little while.

If he can then it will be an inspired move, and will no doubt deliver quite a few goals between now and the end of the season.

If not then it risks looking quite foolish.

FA CUP: Portsmouth 1, Bournemouth 2

Cherries head for 5th round

Pugh goal completes comeback

MARC Pugh came off the bench to head Cherries into the fifth round of the FA Cup for only the fourth time in the club's history.

Pugh netted seven minutes from time to complete a second-half comeback as Eddie Howe's team booked their place in tomorrow's draw, writes **NEIL PERRETT**

Gary Roberts, Cherries' nemesis from the 2011 play-off semi-final defeat by Huddersfield, had given Pompey the lead on the stroke of half-time.

But Josh King, who netted an FA Cup hat-trick for Blackburn against Stoke last season, levelled for Cherries with a header in the 70th minute before Pugh popped up with the winner.

Inspirational captain Tommy Elphick made his long-awaited return from injury as boss Eddie Howe made no fewer than 10 changes to the Cherries starting line-up.

Elphick, who had been sidelined for almost five months, partnered ex-Pompey favourite Sylvain Distin at the heart of the Cherries defence.

Adam Smith was the only player to start who had featured in Cherries' 1-1 draw at Sunderland in the Premier League seven days previously.

Recent loan signing Juan Iturbe from Roma was also handed his full debut having made a substitute appearance against West Ham earlier this month.

Howe also welcomed back from injury striker Josh King, while first-year professional Jack Simpson was named among the Cherries substitutes.

Distin did well to prevent Marc McNulty from fashioning an early chance, while Baily Cargill cut out a dangerous low cross from Kyle Bennett.

Cherries survived a flimsy penalty appeal after a Ben Davies corner had bounced awkwardly in front of King before Adam Federici dived to his right to push a stinging drive from McNulty past the post.

Pompey defender Christian Burgess was booked for a clumsy challenge on Glenn Murray with Eunan O'Kane's resultant free-kick almost creeping in at the far post.

Cherries went close to drawing first blood through Iturbe after 28 minutes, the Argentinean's shot from the edge of the box tipped on to the post by Pompey's on-loan goalkeeper Ryan Fulton.

Pompey took the lead through Roberts on the stroke of half-time, the experienced campaigner showing all his guile to finish coolly from close range following a move down the right involving Bennett and McNulty.

Pompey appealed in vain for a penalty at the start of the second half after defender Enda Stevens had



Bournemouth's Marc Pugh celebrates scoring his side's winning goal



Bournemouth's Joshua King scores an equaliser at Fratton Park

gone to ground under a challenge by O'Kane, with referee Mike Dean unmoved.

Federici pounced a swerving free-kick from Ben Davies before Bennett slipped a lovely through ball to Roberts but he was only able to roll his effort from an acute angle across the face of the goalmouth.

A double substitution saw Murray and Iturbe replaced by Matt Ritchie and Marc Pugh after 62 minutes before Lewis Grabban blazed a presentable chance over the crossbar.

Cherries levelled with 20 minutes remaining when King's clever flicked header from O'Kane's free-kick into

the near post flew past Fulton and nestled in the back of the net.

Federici had to be on his toes to clutch Bennett's free-kick as Pompey looked to regain the lead before Matt Clarke's timely interception prevented Grabban from pulling the trigger.

Cherries took the lead when Pugh headed home from close range seven minutes from time, the winger following up to score after Fulton had saved from Grabban with the ball looping towards the far post.

Pompey: Fulton, Davies, Burgess (Webster, 62), Clarke, Stevens, Doyle, Close, Roberts (Evans,

62), McNulty, Bennett, McGurk (Tollitt, 76).

Unused subs: Naismith, Barton, Chaplin, Jones (g/k).

Booked: Burgess.

Cherries: Federici, Smith, Elphick (Francis, 75), Distin, Cargill, MacDonald, O'Kane, King, Murray (Ritchie, 62), Grabban, Iturbe (Pugh, 62).

Unused subs: Butcher, Simpson, Wakefield, Allsop (g/k.)

Booked: O'Kane.

Referee: Mike Dean (Wirral).

Share article

Attendance: 18,901 (including 2,885 away supporters).

Forster: Euros not a priority

from front page

Saints have climbed five places from 13th to 8th and steered clear of any potential relegation dogfight in the process.

Although Forster has had only two saves to make since his comeback, it has arrived in tandem with a new-found solidity at the back for Saints.

That will have alerted England boss Roy Hodgson ahead of two Euro 2016 warm-up friendlies in March against Germany and Holland.

Hodgson gave Forster all three of his Three Lions caps so far against Scotland, Chile and Honduras and selected him for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

But the Saints man has made it clear that his focus will continue to be on domestic duties rather than looking to a potential call-up for the summer tournament in France.

"Not at all to be honest," he said, when asked if the Euros were on his mind. "I'm just delighted to be back playing football."

"After ten months out and how far we've come in that in that ten months."

Enjoying

"I think, for me, I'm just taking it game-by-game and just enjoying playing football again."

"We'll see what happens." The former Celtic stopper is now turning his attentions to making it a fourth successive clean-sheet against Arsenal at the Emirates on Tuesday night.

"We know the quality we've got in the squad and we've had that all season. We've got a very strong squad and some top, top players within that squad," he said.

"The gaffer absorbs confidence in us with the way we work and train. We knew the results would come and it's nice to be on a little run. "Hopefully we can just build on that."

He added: "It's a nice little run we're on now. We've got Arsenal away next, so it's another very tough game and one that we'll have to work hard towards and really focus on."

"I think we can be proud of what we've done over the last couple of weeks and hopefully we can continue and take the confidence from the last few results."



Fraser Forster

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Eastleigh 1 Wrexham 1

Honours even as Spitfires stretch their unbeaten run

EASTLEIGH stretched their unbeaten Vanarama National League run to seven games with a 1-1 home draw against Wrexham this afternoon.

There was frustration in the Spitfires' camp that they didn't turn their many chances into a victory but, ultimately, the afternoon ended with a mighty sigh of relief when the Dragons missed a late penalty.

After a night of heavy rain match referee Constantine Hatzidakis requested a couple of suspect areas on the pitch to be sanded before finally giving the game the go-ahead shortly before 2pm.

But there was still concern as the players were doing their warm-up and a small tractor was on the field as late as 2.45pm patching up the boggy bits.

When the teamsheet arrived, it came minus the name of Eastleigh's top scorer James Constable, again rested as a precaution after pulling out of last week's Boreham Wood game with a tweaked thigh muscle.

Coming on top of Yemi Odubade's hamstring injury and Ross Lafayette's loan to Aldershot, it left the Spitfires short of strikers. Jack Midson was again deployed up top in a relatively young line-up containing new 'record' signing Luke Coulson, signed for an undisclosed fee from Oxford City.

The highly-rated 21-year-old was deployed wide right initially and, within seconds, had delivered a decent low cross towards Midson at the near post.

Two minutes later Josh Payne volleyed an effort over with the outside of his boot from Jai Reason's lay-off.

Spitfires' keeper Ross Flitney produced the first save of the afternoon, turning away Connor Jennings' low drilled shot, but the linesman's flag had already been raised in any case.

After a relatively low-key start, the game was lit up in spectacular style by Eastleigh midfielder ANDY DRURY who gave the hosts a tenth-minute lead with a goal straight out of the top drawer.

Made captain in the absence of Paul Reid and Ben Strevens, he gathered in Joe Partington's short throw on the right and, in one glorious move, turned and unleashed a left-foot beauty into the far top corner from all of 30 yards.

That strike was matched by some delightful attacking football from the Spitfires who felt hard done by when Kaid Mohamed looked to be blocked off inside the area as he raced onto a return pass from Midson.

But, just when Eastleigh were getting well on top, Wrexham pegged them back with an 18th-minute suck-



Eastleigh's Andy Drury scores the opening goal. Pictures: Chris Moorhouse



Eastleigh's new signing Luke Coulson, left, and Wrexham's Jamal Fyfield

er punch.

The ball took an unfortunate bounce off right-back Partington into the path of SEAN NEWTON who, without hesitation, fired straight through Flitney's legs for 1-1.

Eastleigh briefly lost their way, but soon got their mojo back with Wrexham's Jevan Vidal doing well to deal with Kaid Mohamed's dangerous cross from the right before Dragons keeper Rhys Taylor brilliantly kept out Payne's fearsome strike from the edge of the box.

Mohamed's follow-up was scrambled clear by the visitors who were then undone by Partington's right-

wing cross, but Drury's header was straight at the keeper.

The buccaneering Partington was soon bursting forward again but this time Mohamed couldn't keep his shot down from Drury's lay-off.

Partington failed to reappear for the second half, troubled by quad injury, and was replaced by Strevens. It allowed manager Chris Todd to take a look at new signing Coulson in his familiar right-back role.

Reason, playing up top with Midson, tested Taylor with a couple of early corners.

Generally, though, the game was becoming littered with fouls and

stoppages and there was one slight scare for Eastleigh when goalscorer Newton lashed a shot into the side netting from an acute angle with 54 minutes gone.

When the Spitfires were finally allowed to play some football, Drury twice threatened - first forcing Taylor to claw behind his shot for a corner and then chipping one over the bar.

The blue shirts kept pressing and, on 66 minutes, Fyfield managed to throw his body in front of Reason's strike and Midson's follow-up drifted over.

The Dragons' muscular defender Fyfield, already booked, got another ticking off from the ref for bringing down Midson on the halfway line as the home fans chanted in vain for a red card.

Lee Cook replaced Mohamed on 77 minutes and, within a matter of seconds, it looked as if fellow sub Strevens would score. Will Evans picked out Reason inside the area and he squared to Strevens who was denied by some more strong, last-ditch defending by Fyfield as he shaped to shoot.

With three minutes remaining there was almost a catastrophic ending for Eastleigh when Evans was penalised for pulling down sub Wes York at the expense of a penalty following a mix-up with Flitney.

But the visiting fans in the Mackay Community Stand were soon silenced when Wrexham skipper Jennings fired against the crossbar.

RESULTS

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

Basingstoke Town 1 Ebbsfleet 2
Chelmsford City 0 Sutton United 2
Eastbourne Borough 5 Bath City 2
Gosport Borough pp Dartford
Hemel Hempstead Town 5 Weston-s-Mare 5
Maidenhead United 2 Havant & Waterlooville 2
Maidstone United 2 Concord Rangers 2
Margate 1 Bishop's Cleeve 1
St Albans City 0 Truro City 1
Wealdstone pp Hayes & Yeading
Whitehawk A-A Oxford City

EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE Premier Division

Bedworth United 3 Weymouth 2
Bideford pp Slough Town
Biggleswade Town 0 Merthyr Town 3
Chippenham Town 4 King's Lynn Town 1
Cirencester Town 2 St Neots Town 5
Dorchester Town 2 Chesham United 1
Dunstable Town 3 Cambridge City 1
Histon 0 Stratford Town 2
Hungerford Town 2 Kettering Town 1
Leamington 2 Frome Town 0
Paulton Rovers 2 Hitchin Town 1
Redditch United pp Poole Town
Division One South & West
AFC Totton 2 Evesham United 2
Bashley pp Mangotsfield United
Bridgwater Town pp Bishops Cleeve
Burnham pp Larkhall Athletic
Didcot Town 2 Shortwood United 2
Marlow 0 Wantage town 1
Slidmore pp Cinderford town
Swindon Supermarine pp Taunton Town
Tiverton Town pp Winchester City
Wimborne Town 0 Banbury United 2
Yate Town 1 North Leigh 3

FA VASE

Nuneaton Griff 0 Salisbury City 3
SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE

Premier Division

Andover 2 Brockenhurst 2
Bemerton HH 1 Fareham Town 2
Blackfield & Langley 3 Alresford Town 2
Folland Sports 2 Fawley 5
Hamworthy United 1 Newport IOW 3
All other games postponed

Division One

East Cowes Vics 3 Ringwood 0
New Milton 2 Downton 0
Romsey Town 2 Hythe & Dibden 0
All other games postponed

PUMA ENGINEERING HAMPSHIRE PREMIER LEAGUE

Premier Division

Hamble Club 3 Liss Athletic 1
Headley United 5 Fleetlands 2
Liphook United 1 Baffins Milton rovers 1
Otterbourne 5 QK Southampton 1
All other games postponed.

Division 1

Andover Lions 1 Upham 4
All other games postponed.
Combination Cup, quarter-final:
Fleetlands 1 Overton United 1
(Overton won 5-4 pens)
Liss Athletic pp Otterbourne.

WYVERN COMBINATION LEAGUE

Division 1

Alton Town 3 Fawley 1
All other games postponed.

DREW SMITH SOUTHAMPTON LEAGUE

Hampshire Intermediate Cup, fourth round

Bournemouth Electric 7 Comrades 1

Premier

All games postponed

Senior 1

Montefiore Halls 2 Chamberlayne Ath 3.

All other games postponed.

National results page - see page 38

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Women's and girls football spotlight



Southampton Saints Women's Reserves

County cup dream is over

SOUTHAMPTON Saints' Hampshire Women's Senior Cup dream was ended when they lost on penalties to Basingstoke Town at Sholing' Silverlake Arena.

The FA Premier SW side were held 2-2 by unbeaten Southern Region Premier table-toppers Basingstoke, before losing 4-2 in a quarter final shoot-out.

Saints Reserves swept aside BTC Ladies 4-0 to set up a tie with their first team in the semi finals of the Southampton FA Cup.

Saints started the tie slowly against a team from Division 1 of the Hampshire Women's League and took a while to find their rhythm.

Saints keeper Millie Peake saved well from a one-on-one situation before Emma King hit a half volley which was deflected just over.

Great promise

Minutes later, Curtis was slipped through behind the back four, running onto a pass from Belinda Rodriguez Villa to open the scoring three minutes before half-time.

Baylie Kelly, stepping up from the under-16s and debuting at left back, was showing great promise and ambition getting forward.

She helped set up the second goal shortly after for Elle Pearce.

Midfielder Tiff Eley set up Pearce for a third goal in the second half, and she completed her hat-trick late on.

● In Division 1 of the Hampshire Women's County League, AFC Stoneham lost 1-0 to Mudeford - Katherine Williams on target.

Sornsen and Veal-Weather replied as Sholing were beaten 3-2 in Division 3 by AFC Petersfield.

Southampton Saints and Fleet Town U14's progressed to the County cup finals with convincing wins.

Fleet caned Gosport 7-0 while Saints thrashed Portsmouth 6-0 with goals from Kia Antoney (3), Grace Jenman



High fives after Saints score against Basingstoke at Sholing.



Debutant Livvy Jones

(2) and Holly Boyle.

The deadlock was broken in the 26th minute through Antoney.

Into the second half and Jenman made it 2-0 with a clinical finish.

Antoney showed good strength be-

fore cutting inside a defender and slotting home before Jenman headed in a King corner.

Jenman turned provider with a neat through ball to Antoney who completed her hat-trick before the same duo combined again and Boyle was on hand to tap in from close range.

● Saints under-13s took on Oakley on a 3G pitch, albeit using seven-a-side goals and a temporarily marked out 9 a side size pitch.

Manson scored the only goal of the first half, before Megan Guy hammered in a screamer to double the lead.

Two minutes later Guy grabber her second, this time from a cross from the left by Grace Griffiths.

Larissa White added a fourth and Ava Berglin made it 5-0.

Finally, Amy Watson added a sixth in the final minute.

Player of the match was awarded to

Katie Oliver, who impressed on the right wing in the second half.

The victory sees Saints U13 move to within three points of leaders AFC Boscombe U14, but with a game in hand.

● Saints U12s won through to the semi finals of the Winchester Girls League U13 Cup after a 6-1 win over Warsash.

Deserved consolation

Saints took the lead when a long ball over the top from Nicole Ryder was collected by Sydney Whymark and she ran on to beat the keeper.

Katie Pakes made it 2-0 following a corner.

Mell converted a penalty and Pakes made it 4-0 before half-time.

Pakes set up two goals in the second half with unselfish crosses, first for Tilly Thomas and then for Leah Ballard, before Warsash scored a deserved consolation near the end.

Murray wins first top title

JAMIE Murray believes he is at the pinnacle of his career after he won his first men's doubles grand slam title with Brazilian Bruno Soares at the Australian Open.

Murray had lost in the final at both Wimbledon and the US Open last year but he and Soares came from behind in Melbourne to beat Canada's Daniel Nestor and Czech Radek Stepanek 2-6 6-4 7-5.

The win could form the second part of a Scottish treble after Gordon Reid won the wheelchair singles earlier on Saturday while Andy Murray takes on Novak Djokovic in the men's singles final on Sunday.

It is the first time two brothers have made separate finals at the same grand slam since Lawrence and Reginald Doherty achieved the feat at Wimbledon in 1906.

Andy said he finds it too stressful to watch his brother live but the world number two was in the crowd, along with Davis Cup captain Leon Smith, for the presentation ceremony, which took place just after 1am.

In his victory speech, an emotional Jamie told his brother: "Andy you should be in bed, I don't know why you're here taking photos."

And Jamie later explained: "It was funny to see Andy there at the end. He'd obviously been watching the match in the locker room. I didn't know that."

"I thought he left to go back to the hotel obviously. Maybe he came back when he thought we had a chance."

Jamie Murray linked up with Soares after splitting with Australian John Peers at the end of last season and the new duo have enjoyed an excellent start together, winning their first title in Sydney earlier this month and now clinching a second.

"For me, the Grand Slam men's doubles, that is going to be the pinnacle of my career other than Davis Cup obviously," Murray said.

"This is what I'm working towards every day, every time I step on the court. It's an amazing feeling to have realised that with Bruno."

"We played a great tournament. Did a lot of great things on the court together. I'm pretty speechless."

"I'm really, really happy with our work the last couple of weeks. It's exciting to know where we can go from here."

Murray is set to rise up to number two in the world doubles rankings and his escalation marks a remarkable turnaround as just over 12 months ago he sat 41st.

It means the Murray brothers could soon both be world number twos in their respective fields and Jamie said the race to reach number one was very much on.

Jamie said: "Yes, I guess the race is on. Bring it on."

SAINTS SPOTLIGHT



Trio a disaster, but club getting it right



THE Daily Echo printed some interesting stats this week.

As Gaston Ramirez joined Dani Osvaldo and Emmanuel Mayuka in exiting Southampton, the paper calculated the trio had cost Saints the best part of £50 million - £50 million we could very easily have put on a bonfire and set fire to.

Certainly Ramirez, at least, remained totally professional in a difficult time and you could always argue it was a classic case of wrong player, wrong place, wrong time. But Osvaldo and Mayuka were just total disasters.

The interesting point to the article is that we all forget about the cost of wages in transfer fees and their impact on a club.

Terrifying

The cost of Mayuka is terrifying. His three-year stay cost around £5m in total, and one goal - and that was in a 5-1 League Cup win at Barnsley. Mayuka made just one league start for Saints. For £5 million, that's just appalling.

You can argue that in the world of football it's nothing, but in the real world, the world where your ticket and mine is part-funded or debited by these decisions ... the fact that £5 million isn't viewed as a huge sum just shows how much football has spiralled out of control.

Compare the above loss to the Rupert Lowe era and you have very interesting comparisons.

Back in the day when I published the Beautiful South fanzine, it was reported that under Lowe transfers in equalled transfers out.

That was quite telling as Saints had made, again, some highly profitable sales and had bought cheap and sold expensive.

What was telling at that time was that if you took those big sales into account, then for transfers out to equal transfers in then we must have sold an awful lot of players for next to nothing.

Emphasis on youth

When last I checked, the departures of Mayuka, Ramirez and Osvaldo haven't generated a penny for Saints to recoup and represent horrific value for money.

It raised interesting comparisons on the two boards.

It seems to be that the Lowe era was one of abject failure and incompetence. The Kruger era, one of success, initiative and acumen.

But scratch a bit below the surface and things look a bit different.

Lowe placed great emphasis on the youth, and believed that the role of the manager was a precarious one as their departure



Gaston Ramirez scores against Arsenal in January 2013 - but his flame never shone brightly for long enough at St Mary's.

would so often devastate a club and lead to the complete loss of the entire managerial team. It leaves clubs having to start from scratch and was, quite simply, ridiculous.

Lowe too found himself at the mercy of bigger clubs raiding his. Does anyone remember those North London yobboes? Cut to the present day and have things changed that much? Not really.

That's no slight on the new board but hopefully gives you, the reader, fresh perspective on the old one.

Mistakes

It may be controversial but I totally agreed with Lowe's view on managers. How many times in the 90's and the 00's did we see managers leave and with them coaches and scouts and, in some cases, a large part of the infrastructure.

In what other industry would you see such an exodus on a simple change of manage-

ment, and on a regular basis?

I'm not defending Lowe, he made some horrific mistakes, but in looking forward you have to understand the past and learn from it.

Lowe believed the youth was the future of the club, and he was widely criticised as "doing it on the cheap".

Yet history will show that the man many people thought was a "football man," Harry Redknapp, is now viewed as a bit of a dinosaur.

Back in the 00's Redknapp was everyone's favourite cheeky chappy. Lowe was just the upper class toff who didn't have a clue about football.

Upper class

Whilst he may have been upper class, and indeed sometimes clueless in how football worked, is he now viewed as being that wrong?

I wholeheartedly believe the current board have got it right, and in the ways Lowe just couldn't manage.

They're fan friendly, they listen, and they put their money where their mouth is - something Lowe just couldn't do.

The Echo's stats show just how precarious running a modern football club is. Mistakes can be made and money can be lost - in vast amounts.

Realistic

The lesson to be learned? As fans, not to constantly demand the club break the bank to buy this player, break the bank to buy that player.

Support the club, believe in the club, but at all times be realistic.

And remember this - for every Rickie Lambert and Jose Fonte, there's an Emmanuel Mayuka waiting to put an extra couple of quid on the cost of your season ticket.

Non league FOOTBALL

Wessex League should 'be grateful' to have Salisbury

Diaper: Whites haven't gone 'big-time' to London

DAVE Diaper reckons the Sydenhams League should feel "grateful" to have a club like Salisbury in their ranks.

Not everyone was happy when the newly-formed Wiltshire outfit - born from the ashes of the ill-fated former Conference side Salisbury City - were placed in the Wessex ranks last summer.

But Sholing boss Diaper reckons the Whites' professional approach and their extraordinary ability to attract fans through the gate makes them a joy to have around, *writes Wendy Gee*.

The Boatmen lost 1-0 at the Ray Mac in front of a 786-strong crowd last Saturday, beaten by a 55th-minute Jack Vallis header.

Had Sholing been a bit sharper (they had played just once since December 19), Diaper feels they might have squeezed something from the game.

But he took nothing away from Steve Claridge's table-toppers who, he believes, are a credit to the league.

"Good luck to Salisbury. The Wessex League should be grateful to have them. It was a good bit of business putting them in the Wessex Premier because it boosts everyone's coffers," he said.

"They had nearly 800 fans there last week, which was more than Havant & Waterlooville had (in the National League South), and every ground they visit probably gets four times the usual number of spectators.

"They're professionally run, which is enviable, and what I like about them is that they haven't been 'big-time' going to London to get players, they've been very sensible and turned good players into very good players.

"They're run by good football people. Jenko (director of football Mick Jenkins) knows what non-League is all about and they're keeping their feet on the ground and setting themselves achievable expectations.

"They've got the right people in charge there. Steve Claridge knows all about the pro side and I've got a lot of time for their coach Matt Holmes.

"It's not just the players on the park that win you leagues and get you to finals, it's the people behind the scenes."

Salisbury were due to fly the Sydenhams flag in the last 16 of the FA Vase at Nuneaton Griff today (Saturday) and, weather permitting, Diaper fully expects them to have returned home victorious.

Blessed with four pacy wide players, he feels the Whites are equipped



Salisbury's Jack Vallis (white) and Sholing's Dan Mason.

to cause any side problems on their day.

"I was very impressed with Salisbury last week," he confessed.

"They've got pace to die for with Taurean Roberts on one side, Dan Demkiv on the other and Danny Young and Claudio Herbert to come off the bench.

"When you're tiring, the last thing you need is those two coming on!

"They must rotate their players and when you've got a couple of lads on the line who are as fast theirs, it's a threat to anyone. If you've got pace and you're well organised, it's difficult to counteract.

"If they can get one or two areas at the back sorted out, they're candi-

dates to go all the way (in league and Vase). They just need to be a bit more resilient.

"We weren't at our best, but we still created five or six good opportunities against them."

A needless free-kick conceded by Sholing defender Dean Faithfull ultimately proved decisive.

Tom Whelan curled the ball in and Vallis - a one-time Eastleigh defender - headed past Boatmen's 'keeper Ryan Gosney at the far post.

"We always knew it was going to be difficult because of our fitness levels," admitted Diaper.

"We've had a lack of training facilities due to the weather and, for the first 25 minutes, it showed.

"But we grew into the game and it was just disappointing the way the goal was conceded.

"One think I always tell our lads is to be sensible in the defensive third and not give away needless free kicks.

"Overall, though, I was pleased with our defending. Pete Castle played his first full game since coming back from injury and played really well.

"I was tempted not start Pete because (Salisbury top scorer) Sam Wilson is quite fast and gets in behind, but he played well in the conditions and marshalled the defence.

"Mind you," he laughed, "he won't be able to walk until next Saturday!"

Saunders' best yet

IAN Saunders hailed Petersfield Town's 3-2 win at high-riding Royston Town as the best performance during his four years in charge.

Saunders, who led the Rams to the Sydenhams Premier title last season, viewed it as their "coming of age" in the Southern League Division One Central.

Having fallen behind, Petersfield went 2-1 up through Joe Briggs and Lewis Hyde, only to be pegged back to 2-2.

But, within two minutes, former Folland Sports forward David Jerrard glanced home the winner.

"Royston battered us 4-0 at our place early in the season, so it shows how far we've come," beamed Saunders.

SHOLING have an 'overseas' trip awaiting them in the quarter-finals of the Sydenhams Wessex League Cup.

Dave Diaper's men have been drawn away to Newport IoW in the last eight.

Full draw: Newport IoW v Sholing, Romsey Town v Totton & Eling v Brockenhurst, Moneyfields v Portland Utd v Bemerton Heath Harlequins, Team Solent v Amesbury Town or Salisbury.

AMESBURY Town are seeking help with the commercial side of the club.

The Sydenhams One outfit need someone to attract sponsorship and raise their profile.

Further details from chairman Steve Pearce on 07885 473380 or vice-chairman Spencer Mulholland on 07747 687730.

Alternatively write to amesburytownfc@gamil.com

SYDENHAMS One outfit Ringwood Town will have to do without the services of Matt Finlay for up to six weeks due to damaged ankle ligaments.

Finlay twisted the joint while warming up ahead of last Saturday's 2-2 draw with Christchurch, forcing manager Charlie Pierson to name himself on the bench.

"The squad is getting a little bit thinner," said Pierson.



Phillip Standfield

Non league FOOTBALL



Baily Cargill

Eddie has high hopes for ex-Stags loanee Baily

FORMER AFC Totton player-of-the-season Baily Cargill has been tipped as an AFC Bournemouth captain of the future by manager Eddie Howe.

Cargill skippered Cherries to victory in the third round of the FA Cup at Birmingham earlier this month.

And the Winchester-born 20-year-old, who grew up as a Saints fan and had a highly successful spell on loan with non-League Totton in 2012/13, was a contender to don the armband again when Cherries visited Portsmouth in the fourth

round today.

The defender, capped by England under-20s, has yet to feature in the Premier League but has been named in several of Howe's matchday squads.

Future captain

"I felt Baily leading out the team at Birmingham was the right thing to do," said Howe.

"I feel he is a future captain of this football club because he has all the ingredients.

"He has the right character, the right attitude, he trains well every day and is an excellent player.

"He played very well at Birmingham.

"It was difficult for him because he was on the right-hand side of defence which, for a heavily left-footed player, wasn't easy for him to adapt, but he did very well.

"I've got really high hopes for Baily and just hope he kicks on from this point."

New start for Reece

EX-EASTLEIGH forward Reece Connolly has signed for Vanarama National League South relegation fighters Basingstoke Town.

The 23-year-old will be keen to prove himself after a chequered start to his career.

He was handed a "second chance" by former Eastleigh boss Richard Hill prior to serving a six-month drugs ban relating back to his time with Farnborough where he had tested positive for cocaine and marijuana.

Connolly penned non-contract forms for the Spitfires in January 2014, having been suspended and subsequently sacked by Farnborough, and performed well for Hill's men in the Conference South.

With the backing of the PFA, the player questioned whether Farnborough should have carried out their own drug testing procedure rather than referring the matter to the FA.

But he later tested positive from a hair follicle test carried out by the sport's governing body and was suspended from all football for six months. Although he resumed training with Eastleigh towards the end of his ban, he did not feature again.

Connolly went on as a second-half substitute for Basingstoke at Havant last weekend.



Reece Connolly

Former Saint Matt's finish is a huge boost for Hawks

HAVANT & Waterlooville winched themselves off the foot of the Vanarama National League South last Saturday - thanks to ex-Saint Matt Paterson.

The basement battle against Basingstoke Town looked to be heading for a goalless draw at Westleigh Park until Paterson weighed in with his 12th goal of the season with just three minutes remaining.

The 1-0 win hoisted the Hawks up to third-to-bottom spot, two points clear of Basingstoke and St Albans City, who have 22 points apiece.

Paterson had been left out of the side of late, but was recalled because James Hayter had flu.

He took his chance with both hands, latching onto Scott Donnelly's threaded pass before drilling a shot across goal into the far bottom corner.

Desire

"I'm pleased for Matt," said manager Lee Bradbury. "He came back in and showed his desire to score."

The Hawks were also boosted by a strong performance from Portsmouth loanee Jack Whatmough, making his first start in almost nine months.

The 19-year-old defender, who had



Matt Paterson in action for Saints in a pre season friendly at QPR in 2009.

featured 36 times for Pompey's first team, suffered a serious knee injury against Cheltenham last March.

Havant were keen to keep up the good work on Tuesday, but their scheduled home game against Bish-

ops Stortford fell victim of a 6.30pm postponement after rain had got under the pitch covers.

"Some rain had seeped through the joins in the covers in and around the centre circle and unfortunately

the match referee decided this area was too wet to play," said a club statement.

"It was a very disappointing decision for the club, the travelling team and both sides' supporters."



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Non league FOOTBALL



Magpies facing a crisis that could lead to extinction

Paula warning as club loses around £8,000 a month

CHAIRPERSON Paula Henley has warned Wimborne Town could go bust with the club haemorrhaging around £8,000 per month.

Due diligence has uncovered debts of around £110,000 and new chief Henley has issued a "cry for help" to stop the Southern One South & West club going under.

"If nothing was to change, we might as well close the doors now," she warned.

"I am dependent on help from people in a voluntary capacity to get everything running as it needs to."

Manager Simon Browne's £1,000-per-week playing budget is set to be axed within a fortnight and the Dorset club - winners of the FA Vase in 1992 - have also made a full-time staff member redundant.

Henley anticipates being able to save the 138-year-old club without an immediate cash injection, but confirmed that payment to players would cease unless funds could be found.

She told the (*Bournemouth*) *Daily Echo*: "We have three options. The first is just to fold and disappear, which nobody wants.

The second is to enter a CVA (creditors' voluntary arrangement), but that has ramifications in terms of points deductions, or we look at what we have, steady the ship and move on.

"A financial injection would certainly be welcomed but, by cutting unnecessary spend, I believe we can make it through to the end of the season without it."

Around £50,000 of the debt has been described as "friendly loans" from parties prepared to wait for their money. The rest is owed to creditors who are being repaid on an ongoing basis.

"Everyone is paid to date," added Henley.

"We don't owe the taxman so it is not horrible debt, it can be managed with the right approach," she said.

Henley also insisted that voluntary relegation to the Sydenhams Wessex League was not on the agenda.

"I don't know if I am speaking from the head or the heart, but we do not want to go down to the Wessex League," she added.

Wimborne are currently ten points above the South & West drop zone, but have already seen many of their more experienced players depart, including Mark Gamble, Ian Oliver and Patrick Wilson who have all joined divisional rivals AFC Totton.

"Nobody in our position is safe and it would be stupid to assume we could be," said Henley.

"There is a Plan B in place and, if



Taffy Richardson lifts the FA Vase after Wimborne's greatest win - the 1992 Wembley final victory over Guiseley. Below - current Magpies chairperson Paula Henley.



we were in real danger, we may try to entice some experienced players. By stemming the losses now, we hope to have built up an amount of money for that."

On the futures of Browne and assistant Brendon King, she added: "They

know exactly what the position is and, at the moment, Simon and Brendon are offering their support."

Browne himself has indicated that he will not walk away - so long as he and his management team are kept fully briefed about what is happen-

ing.

● FORMER board members at crisis-hit Wimborne have pledged to support the Magpies.

Club president and ex-chairman Ken Stewart confirmed he would write off his loan to the club while retaining his 19.84 per cent stake in Parmiter Holdings, the company that owns 77 per cent of Wimborne Town Football Club Limited.

Former director Tony Grant said he would convert in full his loan into shares in Parmiter Holdings. And, while Grant has resigned from the board, he will assist by continuing his voluntary duties.

Director Ken Fergus, who is set to continue with the club until he relocates at the end of the season, confirmed he would write off his loan to the club and donate his 7.44 per cent share in Parmiter Holdings to an appropriate party with the club's best interests at heart.

The value of the loans set to be wiped out by the three former directors is around £40,000.

Will power too strong

ROMSEY Town are still the only team to have beaten Sydenhams One leaders Portland United in the league this season - but they couldn't manage it twice.

Having edged the Islanders 2-1 at the Bypass Ground in August, they travelled to Grove Corner last Saturday with hopes of doing the double.

But a Gareth Will strike was the difference as Portland gleaned revenge with a 1-0 win.

Portland boss Gary Bailey said: "I am pleased for Gareth. He has been our little workhorse in the midfield. He does that disciplined job that allows other people to go on and play."

The winning strike came on 44 minutes. Will broke forward and found Alex Godfrey, who ran at the Romsey defence and slotted the ball back into the path of the midfielder, who whipped it into the bottom corner.

Bailey described it as a "workmanlike performance" from his side and was full of praise for the visitors.

Strong

"Fair play to Romsey, they are a tough team to play against. They are really organised, are quite a big strong side and, even though we weren't surviving real scares, they always posed a threat.

"In the second half they had the wind at their backs, turned us around at every opportunity and they played to their strengths.

"Our centre-back pairing of Ross Carmichael and Lewis Whyton were excellent.

"They marshalled the high, long ball really well and won nearly every header.

"It's another game chalked off and, at the end of the day, even though we weren't at our silky best, sometimes you have got to dig in and win a little bit ugly to get those three points in the bag."

The win extended Portland's advantage to nine points over second-placed US Portsmouth, whose game against AFC Stoneham was postponed.



Portland's Shaun Bessant

Non league FOOTBALL



Matt Brown helps Sholing celebrate their Vase win.

Wembley hero in Transatlantic pact with Solent

TWO former Sholing teammates are in the throes of agreeing a Transatlantic pact to provide promising, young footballers with a passage to America.

James Taylor, manager of Southampton Solent University side Team Solent, is in discussions with former Boatmen's goalkeeper Matt Brown about sending four lads to play for State University of New York at Buffalo during the summer months, writes Wendy Gee.

Brown, whose man-of-the-match performance provided the backbone of Sholing's unforgettable 2014 FA Vase triumph at Wembley, left these shores

to begin a new life in the USA in August last year.

The 26-year-old has quickly made himself at home in the States.

He was recently appointed assistant to Buffalo's men's soccer head coach Stu Riddle for the 2016 season and will be overseeing the goalkeepers.

But Brown, a former sports lecturer/head football coach at Bournemouth and Poole College, has not forgotten his roots.

Taylor explained: "Matt and I have kept in contact and we're looking into a link-up between Solent and Buffalo.

"They're interested in four of our lads going out to America from May until the end of July.

"Matt flew over to look at the ones we are interested in sending.

"If it works out, it's something we would like to do every year."

Brown, who came through Southampton FC's academy with the likes of Real Madrid's Gareth Bale and Arsenal's Theo Walcott, earned a bachelor's degree in physical education from University of St Mark & St John in 2011.

He is pursuing a master's degree at Buffalo.

Barron stars as Winchester win through to last eight

Jamie's cup joy as City make up for wasted trip

WINCHESTER City have landed home advantage in the quarter-finals of the Southern League Red Insure Cup.

Paul Masters' men will host of the winners of the delayed Goldalming Town v Northwood third round clash which is due to be played on February 9.

Southern One South & West promotion hopefuls City progressed to the last eight with a 2-0 Monday night win at Hungerford Town, who sit seventh in the Premier Division.

Ex-Follands midfielder Jamie Barron had a hand in both goals.

With 64 minutes gone his persistence opened the door for top scorer Warren Bentley to fire City ahead.

Barron got the second himself, turning on the edge of the area before firing home left-footed with less than two minutes of normal time remaining.

Red Insure Cup, quarter-final draw: Aylesbury Utd or Leamington v Pottery Bar Town or Slough Town, Cambridge City v Hitchin Town, Winchester City v Godalming Town or Northwood, Merthyr Town v Paulton Rovers.

Wasted

Monday's win helped ease City's frustration after Saturday's wasted league trip to Cinderford Town.

Winchester trekked all the way to Gloucestershire for their eagerly awaited showdown with the South & West league leaders only to discover the pitch was unplayable.

A deep overnight frost had been followed by half an inch of rainfall, but City were nevertheless given the go-ahead to travel after the Causeway Ground surface had somehow passed a 9am inspection.

They arrived to find bog-like condi-



Winchester's Jamie Barron, left.

tions in certain areas and, unsurprisingly, the pitch was given the thumbs down by the match referee at 2pm.

Unimpressed director of football Dave Malone said: "The fault is entirely with whoever passed the pitch fit at 9am.

"There is no way the pitch can have

been fit at that time. In fact it must have been worse than it was at 2pm, which was totally unplayable.

"We now face a midweek trip to the back of beyond, which will suit the home team far more than us."

The good news for City was getting their Hampshire FA Senior Cup

quarter-final against Sholing rescheduled.

Winchester had been due to host it last Wednesday - just two days after the Hungerford trip. But, after some debate with the Hampshire FA, they managed to get it switched to next Wednesday (Feb 3).

Live telly matches

BT SPORT has announced a trio of live Vanarama National League games to be screened over Easter - but none of them involve Eastleigh or, indeed, current league leaders Forest Green.

Coverage will instead concentrate mainly on clubs looking to regain their Football League status.

It kicks off with a Good Friday clash between Tranmere Rovers and Lincoln City (3pm), followed by a potential relegation battle between FC Halifax Town v Altrincham on Saturday, March 26 (12.45pm.).

On Easter Monday (March 28, 5.45pm) the focus turns back to the top end of the table with Wrexham v Cheltenham Town.

A fourth match will be screened the following Friday which again features Gary Johnson's Cheltenham, this time at home to Grimsby Town (7.45pm).

Two big victories

THERE were big wins for Hythe & Dibden and Totton & Eling in Division 1 of the Sydenhams Wessex League last weekend.

Hythe eclipsed Fleet Spurs 5-1 at Clayfields, while Totton & Eling hit a magnificent seven at Andover New Street.

Defender Nick Dwyer soon got Hythe off the mark, striking inside two minutes after Spurs had failed to clear a corner.

Sam Knowles equalised for the visitors, but Fleet had a catastrophic start to the second half when Daniel Bone brought down the lively Sean Parker, inviting Steve Green to beat Mark Appleby from the spot.

Two quickfire Hythe goals midway through the second half, from Parker and Seun Olabiyi, all but killed the contest, before sub Merl Wright struck a fifth in stoppage time.

Totton & Eling's goal spree was led by hat-trick man Jake Rawkins and two-goal Sam House. Adam Lowther and Dylan Gain were also on target for the merry Millers.



Football..Andover Town

Non league FOOTBALL



Unity call from Tom

MANAGER Tom Killick has called for a show of unity at Poole Town in the face of "unreasonable and unfair" outside pressure over recent results.

The table-topping Dolphins were held to a fourth straight Southern Premier draw at Merthyr last Saturday with Will Spetch rescuing a 1-1 result four minutes from time, writes Andy Mitchell.

It trimmed Poole's lead at the summit to just two points and, while Killick admitted his side had not hit previous heights in recent weeks, he appealed for a sense of perspective.

"Externally, there appears to be a perception that we can win this league by ten or 15 points, but I have never thought that. If we won it on goal difference or got promoted via the play-offs, I would be happy," he said.

Hysteria

"There's a little bit of hysteria about what we should be doing and the players just have to stick



Tommy Killick

together and keep trying to grind out results.

"It's unreasonable and unfair to put them under any added pressure.

"Why should we be under any more pressure than Chippenham or Redditch? We're all fighting for the same thing, we just seem to be treated slightly differently because of what happened last season and I think that's a little but unfair.

"We are top and that is an exceptional effort on our part, whether that's by a point, on goal difference, on the back of five wins or some indifferent results. People need to be sensible.

"We are not quite playing as well as we would like, but that happens. We are working hard and our mentality is right, so I have total faith and belief that the players will always do their best.

"I have not always been able to say that as a manager, so I will keep believing in them and encouraging them going forward.

"That is what the club should do as a whole."



Cams Alders

Fareham weather beaten ... and in record fashion!

FAREHAM Town have dubbed 2015/16 their worst ever season – weather-wise.

The bogged-down Reds switched Tuesday's Creekside derby to AFC Portchester's Wicor Rec – but still didn't end up playing.

Due to drainage problems at Cams Alders, Fareham have not staged a home game for three months.

They tried to get around the problem by conceding home advantage to Graham Rix's Royals, but heavy rain conspired against them once more as the

whole Sydenhams Premier programme was a washout.

With successive postponements now in double figures, Town officials scoured the record books this week and, as suspected, they have never experienced a season like it.

If next Tuesday's scheduled game against Folland goes ahead, it will have been three months and nine days since Town's last home game on October 24 – beating the previous record of two months and two days set in both 1947/48

and 1948/49.

Even in the year of the 'great freeze' of 1962/63, they managed to play once between December 22 and February 2.

Including away games, Fareham's current spell of inactivity stretched 42 days ahead of today's scheduled fixture at Bournemouth. That too is a record, beating 39 days during the 1981/82 campaign.

"As you can see, the plans for a 3G surface at Cams are very much a must-have," said a club spokesman.

Joe: I can look after myself a bit more - thanks to Paul!

Partington heaps praise on skipper for great example

JOE Partington says Eastleigh's "motivated" skipper Paul Reid has been an inspiration to him along the road to full fitness.

The Fareham-based right-back has been one of the Spitfires' stand-out performers of the season so far and fans will forever cherish memories of his magical opening goal in the FA Cup third round replay at Bolton.

But having undergone eight operations during an injury-hit career with AFC Bournemouth, it has taken him until the age of 25 to get a near uninterrupted year under his belt, writes Wendy Gee.

Looking back on his extensive injury list, Partington said: "I had my left hip operated on, I had a dislodged bone removed from my foot, I fractured my right leg in training and had my right knee reconstructed.

"In total I had eight operations on my body but, touch wood, I've played almost every single game this year, January through to January, and that's the first time ever I've been able to do it. It's a real personal high for me."

One of only a handful of local lads in the Eastleigh camp, Partington has learned a lot from an 'adopted southerner' about looking after himself.

Carlisle-born ex-Barnsley and Scunthorpe defender Reid, 33, is now loving life on the south coast at Warsash after moving down with his family from Leeds.

"I've learned how to look after myself a bit more now," said Partington, who has taken on extra responsibility for his own well-being since joining Eastleigh, initially on loan, in January last year.

"Here, if you want to do something extra training-wise it's up to you to crack on and do it.

"The captain, Paul Reid, sets a good example. Reidy's very motivated and he does a lot of extras like weights be-



Eastleigh's Joe Partington in action against Macclesfield earlier this season.

fore training.

"Also, we've got a little crew of local lads who come in and do extra training with (assistant manager) Shaun North on a Friday."

That leaves Partington with just one weekday to fill and he spends that coaching on Wednesdays at Matt Le Tissier Natural Coaching, where he is described as a "fantastic role

model" for young players.

He is part of a team headed by 'Le God' himself and includes Francis Benali as academy head coach.

Having been born in Portsmouth, Partington's links at this end of the M27 have predictably earned him some ribbing from his friends on the blue side of the south coast divide.

"I got a bit of a hiding when I told

them I was coaching for Matt Le Tissier!" he laughed.

"One or two of my mates play for Fareham. I grew up with Callum Laycock, who I've known since I was two or three, he's one of my very best friends.

"Luke Heard's another and I'm also mates with (ex-Saint) Matt Paterson, who plays for Havant."

Non league FOOTBALL

'Fragile' Gamble can't wait for next season already

'We will push on next year' insists new Stags striker

AS someone who has "fed on scraps" in recent seasons, Mark Gamble's goal account is surprisingly weighty.

He dined out as Wimborne Town's top scorer for two years running and had tucked away another 11 goals in 14 games this term prior to serious injury intervening.

So the mind boggles as to what the goal-hungry Ulsterman can achieve surrounded by a feast of attacking talent at his new club AFC Totton, *writes Wendy Gee.*

The striker's last fateful appearance for Wimborne in October saw him stretchered off against Weymouth with ankle ligament damage and two displaced bones in the foot.

By his own admission Bitterne-based Gamble, who has penned an 18-month contract for the Stags, is still feeling "fragile" after a frustrating spell on the sidelines.

But in his two sub appearances, his link-up play with his new teammates has already whetted his appetite for a prospective 2016/17 promotion push from the Southern One South & West.

Speaking after last Saturday's 2-0 home win over Bridgwater Town, in which he went on as a 57th-minute sub for Dylan Knight, Gamble noticed the difference straight away being with "better players and a better team."

"The quality's better at Totton, you can tell some of them have played higher and I think we will push on next year," he predicted. "They're a good bunch here and they've made me feel extremely welcome. It's nice to play locally for a change. I don't think I've had a local club since I was at Winchester."

It was wingers Mike Gosney and Nick Watts whose goals beat Bridgwater but, as well as scoring, the wide pair offer a supply line that a fully-fit Gamble should thrive off.

"I fed on scraps at Wimborne, never knowing when the next cross was coming in, but here you know that as soon as these players get half a yard, they'll whip the ball into the box," he said. "That sort of service is something I haven't had before."

"Lads like Mike Gosney and Nick Watts have been a constant threat when I've played against them for Bashley and Wimborne."

Despite his excellent Southern League scoring record, Gamble accepts he will have to bide his time to get regular starts for Totton.

For one thing he is only just over his injury and, for another, he has to get past hard-working, young forward Knight, who has improved with



Mark Gamble, above left, with Totton boss Steve Hollick. Main picture: Gamble during his Wimborne Town days.

every game since stepping up from Wessex football with Fawley, and club stalwart Nathaniel Sherborne.

"Steve (Hollick, Totton manager) said reputations count for nothing

when the team's winning and it's a case of me knuckling down to get myself match fit," said Gamble.

"When I've been out injured before I've always been able to do some exer-

cise, but this time I just had to rest. Until about four or five weeks ago, I couldn't do anything.

"It makes it hard trying to break into the team when all the others are physically fit, so I've been trying to do stuff in the evenings to get myself fit.

"Totton have got a solid starting side from one to 11 and Steve says the lads on the bench have got to be patient."

By day Gamble works as a sports tutor for Southampton FC and, although he grew up as a Manchester United fan in his native Northern Ireland, he was chuffed to hear of ex-non-Leagueer Charlie Austin's exploits at Old Trafford last weekend.

"I played against Charlie a few times when he was at Poole and you could tell he had the ability to make it as a pro," he said.

"It's an example to younger players that if they knuckle down and work hard, the world can be their oyster."

A trio of loanees

TEENAGE Eastleigh defender Jack Smith is among a trio of rearguard loan signings to have linked up with Ryman Premier outfit Farnborough this week.

The Spitfires academy graduate is joined at Cherrywood Road by Sam Pearce and Perry Ryan, both from Gosport Borough.

Smith spent some of the early part of the season dual-signed with Sydenhams Premier outfit Brockenhurst and recently returned from a spell with Bath City of the Vanarama National League South.

Like the experienced Pearce, he operates at centre-back, while Ryan – back for a second loan with Farnborough – is equally at home in midfield or defence.

Radar

Boro boss Spencer Day said: "All three lads have been on our radar for a couple of weeks. We'd hoped to have them for last Saturday's game, but the timing didn't quite happen.

"To get Sam, in particular, I'm sure will be a great signing. He's coming back from an operation and has played a development game already and looks like he's never been away.

"Add to that Perry, at either defence or midfield, and young Jack, who's very highly-rated, and I believe we now have cover in both defence and in midfield with better depth."

No fee

HAVANT & Waterlooville have missed out on a sell-on fee following Nigel Atangana's move to Leyton Orient.

The ex-Hawks midfielder left Portsmouth for Brisbane Road last week in an 18-month deal believed to be around £20,000.

The sum was not enough to trigger the sell-on clause agreed when H&W sold Atangana to Pompey for an undisclosed fee in the summer of 2014.

The 26-year-old Frenchman went on to make 48 appearances in Portsmouth blue.



Jack Smith

Djok: Murray will be hungry to win Open

NOVAK Djokovic knows how it feels to be on a losing streak in grand slam finals and he believes Andy Murray will be hungrier than ever on Sunday to win his first Australian Open.

Murray is hoping to end a barren run of four defeats at the last hurdle in Melbourne, three coming at the hands of Djokovic and another against Roger Federer.

But while Murray has only beaten the Serbian once in their last 11 meetings, he might take inspiration from his rival the other side of the net.

Djokovic lost five out of six major finals between 2012 and 2014, and the world number one is still yet to triumph at the French Open, losing his third final at Roland Garros to Stan Wawrinka last year.

"I've played him many times and been in the situation before where I haven't won specific tournaments," Djokovic said.

"So I understand the kind of desire and will to win that is present. But of course I don't underestimate him. No question about it.

"I have a tremendous respect and admiration for everything he's achieved in his career. He's one week older than me so we grew up together.

"We have very similar styles of game and a very similar trajectory to



Andy Murray at the Australian Open tennis championships professional tennis, so it's nice to see that our rivalry keeps on going and we keep playing for the biggest titles."

Djokovic is gunning for his sixth Australian Open title and 11th overall while Murray is bidding to add to his triumphs at the US Open in 2012 and Wimbledon in 2013.

The odds favour the top seed, who was in irresistible form against Federer on Thursday and has lost only once in his last 34 grand slam matches. It is not inconceivable he could win all four major tournaments in 2016.

"I'm expecting a battle with Andy, as it always is, a very physically demanding match. Lots of rallies, exchanges.

"It's no secret we know how we play against each other. It's two games that are very much alike, so it's basically who's going to outplay who from the baseline," said Djokovic.

Murray's string of recent defeats against Djokovic do not tell the whole story.

He was up a break in the third set in the final here 12 months ago and then outplayed the Serbian for a set and a half at the French Open.

The key, he admits, is making those spells last.

"The most important thing for me is to sustain my level for long enough, not just for one set here or there, a few games here or there," Murray said.

Fruitful career for S

SCRAMBLED egg and cigarettes: the lunch of an FA Cup champion.

Modern footballers end up slapped on the front of a glossy mag or newspaper if they're caught smoking these days.

But this was a different era. It was an era when footballers would mix with supporters on the train to the game and in the pub, *writes Peter Howard*

It was the era when footballers were paid pennies. They were just as working class as the supporters.

There wasn't a humongous financial divide, like there is today, that puts a huge chasm between fans and players.

Those were the days when players would swig as many pints as the next man.

In the fear of sounding like a broken record, or Uncle Albert from Only Fools and Horses for that matter, what we're talking about here is perhaps a golden era.

And there's no better thing that epitomises that than Saints' 1976 FA Cup winning left-back David Peach and his pre-match routine.

"I used to have a fag at 2pm on a Saturday at The Dell, meet my dad give him a ticket and have a fag," he remembers. "I just used to have scrambled egg to eat.

"I always have happy memories from that era. It was great and I'd do it all again for the same money.

"It gave me a nice living. It was a great life and if you ask any of the lads they'd do it all again for the same money because of the times we had.

"I don't think the camaraderie would be the same now. If it is, it's all internal and hidden because they walk down the street and they can't say anything.

"We used to mix the supporters, travel on the train with them."

Peach appeared three times at Wembley for Saints in total, after playing in the FA Cup final win over Manchester United, the Community Shield and League Cup final 3-2 defeat to Nottingham Forest in 1979.

He made just short of 300 appearances for Saints after becoming Lawrie McMenemy's first signing at the club in January 1974.

Peach didn't even know where Southampton was when McMenemy swiped him from under the noses of Leeds United and West Ham for a then considerable fee of £60,000.

After not knowing the exact location of his new employer, things didn't exactly get better.

On his first start for the club, Saints lost 7-0 at Ipswich and, after coming to Hampshire in the first place to fulfil his dream of playing in Division One, the club were relegated to the second tier that same season.

Things did get better, much better in fact, and, within two years after signing, Peach was lifting the FA Cup and was a valued cog in Mc-



David Peach helps show off the FA Cup on that famous day 40 years ago.

Menemy's machine.

The legendary Saints boss always used the term 'road-sweepers and violinists' to describe his teams.

What he meant was there was those players who had the ability to create a stunning, match winning moment. They were the violinists.

Then, the road-sweepers were those that did the hard graft, doing the necessary things that had to be done to win the game. They might not take the glory, but their role is vital.

Well, Peach was most certainly a firm member of the road-sweeper club.

"Peter Osgood, Mick Channon, Jim McCalliog: those are the violinists," Peach explained. "Then a couple of years later in the League Cup final we had Alan Ball and people like that.

"They used to call us - Nick Holmes, Bobby Stokes, Paul Gilchrist and myself - the road-sweepers.

"And they were the violinists. They can't do without us and we couldn't do without them."

The embodiment of the violinists and road-sweepers analogy came when Saints travelled to Division Four side Bradford City for the quarter final of the '76 FA Cup run.

"It was a perfect scenario because we weren't very good. We were struggling," said Peach. "It wasn't a great game. It was 0-0, you were always thinking if they nicked one here, we're in trouble.

"We had a free-kick on the edge of the box and Jim McCalliog, who was class, and Peter Osgood, who was class - they were the violinists.

"McCalliog flicked it up and Osgood kept it 0-0 and a stunning symphony from Peter Osgood and Jim McCalliog played the violinists' role. The game-changer. The magic moment. It was at that point in the cup run



David Peach, right, with Peter Rodrigues in 2007.

good's smashed it in the bottom corner and we won 1-0.

"On the day, we were fortunate to win 1-0."

And that is it. The road-sweepers

ny from Peter Osgood and Jim McCalliog played the violinists' role. The game-changer. The magic moment.

It was at that point in the cup run

GOT A STORY FOR US? EMAIL echosport@dailyecho.co.uk

Saints legend Peach



David Peach fires in a shot in 1974 and, right, with Peter Rodrigues in 2007.



David Peach in action for Saints in 1978

that it hit home to Peach that maybe winning the competition was realistic.

After all, Saints hadn't gone out that season to go on a cup run – they were after promotion back to the top-flight.

"We got Bradford out the way and we were thinking we're in the semi-final now, this is serious," said Peach.

"The semi-final was either Derby in their heyday under Cloughy (Brian Clough), Manchester Unit-

ed under Tommy Docherty, with his up and coming crazy gang, us and Crystal Palace under Malcolm Allison.

"Who do you want draw? We want Palace, of course. We didn't want either of the other two. They [Palace] were in the same league as us and we were better than them.

"The draw comes out and we've got Crystal Palace.

"So Derby have to play Manchester United – two of the top teams at the time – and then we get Palace.

"We won at Stamford Bridge against Palace. Paul Gilchrist scored the first one and then Mick fell over as he usually did and we had a penalty."

So to set the scene, it's 1-0 to Saints in the FA Cup semi-final and Mick Channon has won a late penalty.

That penalty, if scored, would secure progress to the FA Cup final.

If missed, Palace might sneak an equaliser and throw players and supporters' childhood dreams into doubt.

So you need a penalty taker, a cool head, someone who has done this time and time again. Someone who could rival Matthew Le Tissier.

Well, Peach was the man. In more than 60 spot-kicks throughout his career, Peach missed once.

"I was the best penalty taker ever," he quipped. "One I missed. Disaster.

"Paul Bradshaw for Wolves – I hit the post. He went the wrong way but it hit the post. It skimmed the post and went wide. That was the end of that.

"I don't know what Matt Le Tiss's

record was, but it wasn't as good as mine. Matt was a great player but he wasn't as good as me as penalties," he said, smirking.

"He had a few. When I took mine and I missed one. It was 64 on the trot, but that was with Gillingham as well as Southampton."

The Palace penalty was different for so many reasons.

Peach, usually one to place his penalties, had a change of plan. This was no time for placing it.

"It was 1-0 with about 15 minutes to go. I knew if I scored that would be it," he said. "I used to take the penalties and I never missed, really. I only missed one in my life.

"The only thing was I changed tactics against Palace and I just smashed it.

"I used to pick a side where I was going to put it. I would place it and I'd do that. As soon as we got a penalty, I made my mind up before I ever got to the penalty box.

"On this occasion I put the ball down and just thought 'smash it'.

"I knew if I scored that penalty it would be the end of the game.

"It went straight down the middle. Keepers always dive and you look, even nowadays, how many penalties just go straight."

Saints were through to the final and Peach had hero-status within his grasps.

Peach looks back on the famous 1-0 win over Manchester United at Wembley.

"We could have been 1-0 down within two minutes. Ian Turner made a great save in the first minute," he said.

"We settled down as the game went on and we fancied ourselves to win in the second-half if we could keep them out. I thought we could nick a goal.

"Mick should have scored in the second half. He went clean through and missed the target.

"Then we get the offside goal," he added with a wry smile. "It was never offside!"

"We all ran up and celebrated. We scored in the 84th minute. After that it was the longest ten minutes on the football pitch we'd all ever had.

"That put a bit of pressure on us. They should have scored from the kick-off because we were still celebrating when they kicked off.

"We were just thinking 'let's get to the end of the game'.

"We had a goal-kick, the ball went out on my side. I fetched the ball and rolled it back to Ian Turner and Clive Thomas (the referee) was on the edge of the box.

"As I walked past – I'll never forget it – he said 'how do you feel, Dave?' I said 'Clive, I'm knackered'. He then turned to me and said 'well, you've just won the FA Cup' and blew his whistle.

"I just sank to my knees and then Ian Turner came to me and jumped all over me and we went ballistic for about two to three minutes.

"The celebrations lasted about six months, I think!"

Kerber stuns Serena to claim the title

GERMANY'S Angelique Kerber pulled off a stunning victory to win the Australian Open and dash Serena Williams' hopes of clinching a record-equalling 22nd grand slam title.

Kerber was defending the Open-era best tally of her compatriot Steffi Graf and she did it playing the match of her life, beating Williams 6-4 3-6 6-4 to claim her first major title.

Completing victory after two hours and eight minutes, Kerber lay outstretched in disbelief on Rod Laver Arena, having sealed one of the biggest shocks in tennis history.

Kerber said she had "one leg on the plane home" when match point down against Misaki Doi in the opening round but now, seven victories later, she is an Australian Open champion.

Graf has become something of a mentor for the world number six and there is some symmetry that she is the first German to win in Melbourne since Graf did in 1994.

"When I played here in the first round I had one leg on the plane to Germany and now I'm here," Kerber said.

"I think I get the second chance and I take my chance to be here in the finals against Serena.

"I'm really honoured to be here and to win it is my dream come true tonight.

"My whole life I worked really hard



Angelique Kerber of Germany holds the trophy aloft

and now I'm here I can say I'm a grand slam champion. It's crazy and unbelievable."

It is also the first time Williams has lost in eight Australian Open finals and the 21-time major champion was well below-par, making 46 unforced errors, more than double the amount of any of her previous rounds.

"Congratulations, you did so well, you played the best in the tournament," Williams said.

"Let me be the first to congratulate you and I hope you enjoy this moment."

Williams came into the match as heavy favourite, having won their past four meetings, but the American endured a nightmare start as 20 unforced errors helped Kerber take a surprise one-set lead.

Williams regained some composure at the start of the second set and Kerber gave her the encouragement she needed, as two double faults gifted the American a break and 3-1 advantage. It was all she needed as she served out with ease to force a decider.

But Kerber halted her opponent's momentum immediately with a hold and early break.

Williams, serving under pressure as she trailed 5-4, dumped a forehand into the net giving Kerber Championship point. She converted at the first time of asking as a backhand flew long.

SAINTS SPOTLIGHT

Incredible stat from Saints' win

No wonder Van Gaal has come under pressure!

HOPEFULLY no Manchester United fans at Old Trafford last Saturday decided to nip to the toilet in the 13th minute.

If they had, they would have missed an event that would happen just the once throughout their club's Premier League loss to Saints, writes **SIMON CARTER**.

Yes, their club had a shot on target.

Daley Blind's left-footed drive was held by Fraser Forster in the visitors' goal.

That was it.

Forster would have no more saves to make, in the home of one of the most famous clubs in world football – a club whose name is synonymous with attacking football.

In all, Manchester United managed just eight attempts at goal last Saturday.

That was one more than Saints achieved.

Of Saints' seven efforts, just two were on target.

But the main stat, obviously, was that one of the visitors' attempts ended up in the back of the net.

Charlie Austin had only been on the pitch a few minutes when he headed what will go down in history as a famous debut winner.

That was only the second on-target attempt in the game's 87 minutes, as Saints' second on-target effort would not arrive until injury-time – Oriol Romeu seeing a shot saved by David de Gea.

The game summed up Manchester United's failings this season.

United have only scored two goals in the first half of their 11 home league games this term.

And one of those, on the opening day of the season, was an own goal from Tottenham's Kyle Walker.

The other was a 45th minute strike from Memphis Depay in a 3-0 win over Sunderland.

Two goals in just over eight hours of football – at Old Trafford! Unthinkable, just a few years ago.

Actually, unthinkable even now! Louis Van Gaal has been regularly criticised for his dour tactics, and the stats back that up.

Last season they averaged 13.5 shots on target, with an average of



Oriol Romeu fires in a shot at Old Trafford.



Charlie Austin heads Saints' late winner at Old Trafford.

4.7 on target.

United have enjoyed more possession this season than any other Premier League club – 56.3 per cent.

But they are only averaging 11.2 goal attempts per game.

Of those, only an average of 3.5 have been on target.

Only Stoke (3.4), Aston Villa (3.3) and West Bromwich Albion (3) possess a worse average.

For a fanbase brought up – and spoilt – on a diet of goals, silverware and glory, those facts are hard to stomach.

Despite Van Gaal having spent tens of millions on new players, United are obviously regressing. Still, that is not Saints' problem – far from it.

Ronald Koeman had his own worries a few weeks ago, but his headaches appear to have cleared. Since returning from injury to take his place in goal, Fraser Forster has kept three successive clean sheets.

In 270 minutes, he has only had two shots to save. The one from Daley Blind and another from West Brom's Craig Cathcart.

Saints have one of the best top flight records in terms of preventing opponents getting in goal attempts.

They are sixth in the list with only an average of 11.4 goal attempts against per game this term.

Manchester United are second – with 9.5 – while it might come as a surprise to learn that Bournemouth are fourth. Eddie Howe's men, despite being just above the relegation zone, have limited their opponents to just 10.8 goal attempts per game.

FOOTBALL FIXTURES

Monday, February 1
EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE
Premier Division: Hungerford v Stratford, Redditch v Frome
Tuesday February
Premier League:
Arsenal v Southampton, Leicester v Liverpool, Norwich v Tottenham, Sunderland v Man City, West Ham v Aston Villa, Crystal Palace v Bournemouth, Man Utd v Stoke City, West Brom v Swansea 20:00
Sky Bet Championship
Derby v Preston, Ipswich v Reading, Sheffield Wednesday v Burnley, Wolves v Bolton 19:45
Sky Bet League 1
Doncaster v Walsall, Port Vale v Swindon, Shrewsbury v Southend 19:45
Sky Bet League 2
Luton v Yeovil, Morecambe v Portsmouth.
VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE
Barrow v Gateshead, Eastleigh v Bromley.
VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH
Bishop's Cleeve v Hemel Hempstead, Gosport Borough v Eastbourne Borough.
EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE
Premier Division: Chesham v Dunstable, Leamington v Dorchester, Poole Town v Weymouth.
Division One South & West: Bashley v Swindon Supermarine, Cinderford v Bishop's Cleeve, Marlow v North Leigh, Wantage v Didcot.
SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE
Premier Division: Fareham v Folland Sports, Horndean v Cowes Sports, Moneyfields v Brockenhurst, Salisbury v Andover Town.
Division One: Ringwood v Downton, Romsey v Amesbury, Tadley Calvea v AFC Stoneham, Totton & Eling v Hythe & Dibden.
HAMPSHIRE FA SENIOR CUP
Quarter-final: Basingstoke Town v Totton & Eling or Horndean, Fleet Town v Lymington Town, Havant & Waterlooville v AFC Portchester.
ISLE OF WIGHT GOLD CUP
Newport IoW v Oakfield.

Wednesday February 3
Barclays Premier League
Everton v Newcastle, Watford v Chelsea
HAMPSHIRE FA SENIOR CUP
Quarter-final: Winchester City v Sholing.
EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE
Division One South & West: Slimbridge v Shortwood (7:30)
SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE
Premier Division: Verwood v Team Solent, Whitechurch v Hamworthy Utd.
Division One: Christchurch v Portland.

Saturday, February 6
Barclays Premier League
Aston Villa v Norwich City, Liverpool v Sunderland, Man City v Leicester, Newcastle v West Brom, Stoke City v Everton, Swansea v Crystal Palace, Tottenham v Watford.

Sky Bet Championship
Birmingham City v Sheffield Wednesday, Bolton Wanderers v Rotherham, Burnley v Hull, Cardiff City v MK Dons, Charlton Athletic v Bristol City, Fulham v Derby County, Leeds v Nottingham Forest, Middlesbrough v Blackburn, Preston v Huddersfield, QPR v Ipswich, Reading v Wolves.

Sky Bet League 1
Burton v Bradford, Chesterfield v Peterborough, Crewe Alexandra v Rochdale, Gillingham v Swindon, Oldham Athletic v Blackpool, Scunthorpe v Doncaster, Sheffield United v Wigan, Southend United v Colchester, Walsall v Millwall
Sky Bet League 2
Bristol Rovers v AFC Wimbledon, Cambridge United v Dagenham and Redbridge, Carlisle United v Accrington Stanley, Exeter City v Oxford United, Mansfield v Morecambe, Newport County v Barnet, Northampton Town v York City, Notts County v Hartlepool United, Portsmouth v Leyton Orient, Stevenage v Crawley, Wycombe Wanderers v Luton, Yeovil Town v Plymouth Argyle.

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE
Barrow v Cheltenham, Boreham Wood v Kidderminster, Lincoln v Eastleigh, Truro v Southport, Welling v Altrincham, Wrexham v Forest Green.
VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH
Bath City v Whitehawk, Bishop's Cleeve v Ebbsfleet, Concord v Eastbourne Borough, Dartford v St Albans, Gosport Borough v Maidenhead, Hayes & Yeading v Margate, Hemel Hempstead v Chelmsford, Oxford City v Maidstone, Wealdstone v Truro, Weston-super-Mare v Basingstoke.

EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE
Premier Division: Chesham City v Bideford, Chesham v Cirencester, Frome v Dunstable, Hitchin v Histon, Kettering v Paulton Rovers, King's Lynn v Redditch, Merthyr Town v Chippenham, Poole Town v Biggleswade, Slough v Bedworth, St Neots v Hungerford, Stratford v Dorchester, Weymouth v Leamington.

Division One South & West: Banbury v Bridgwater, Bishop's Cleeve v Swindon Supermarine, Cinderford v Tiverton, Evesham v Bashley, Larkhall v Slimbridge, Mangotsfield v Marlow, North Leigh v Wimborne, Shortwood v AFC Totton, Taunton v Didcot Town, Wantage v Burnham, Winchester City v Yate.
SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE
Premier Division: AFC Portchester v Bemerton HH, Aitresford v Lymington, Andover Town v Moneyfields, Brockenhurst v Sholing, Cowes Sports v Fawley AFC, Folland Sports v Verwood, Hamworthy Utd v Blackfield & Langley, Newport IoW v Team Solent, Salisbury v Horndean, Whitechurch v Bournemouth Poppies.

Division One: AFC Stoneham v Pewsey Vale, Amesbury v Christchurch, Andover New Street v US Portsmouth, Downton v Hythe & Dibden, Fleet Spurs v Ringwood, Laverstock & Ford v East Cowes Vics, New Milton v Totton & Eling, Portland v Alton, Tadley Calvea v Romsey.

HAMPSHIRE INTERMEDIATE CUP
Quarter-finals: Bournemouth Manor v Winchester Castle, Comrades of Bournemouth Electric v Bush Hill, Otterbourne v AFC Portchester Res.
FUMA ENGINEERING HAMPSHIRE PREMIER LEAGUE

Senior Division: Baffins Milton Rovers v Liss, Hamble Club v Liphook, Headley v Golden Common, Locks Heath v Infinity, Paulsgrove v Overton, OK Southampton v Fleetlands, Stockbridge v Clantfield.
Division One: Four Marks v Sway, Michelmersh & Timsbury v Lyndhurst, Netley Central v Andover Lions, Upham v AFC Petersfield.

Combination East: AFC Petersfield v Baffins Milton Rovers, Fleetlands v Hayling Utd, Liss v Liphook.
Combination West: Bush Hill v Otterbourne, Hedge End Rangers v Hamble Club, Infinity v Overton, Winchester City v OK Southampton.

Six Nations 2016

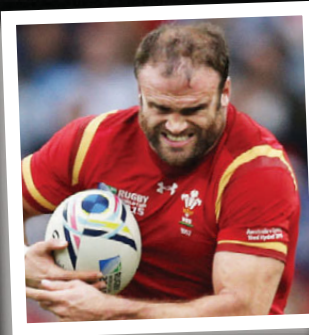


EIGHT-PAGE PREVIEW SUPPLEMENT

The joy of six

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INSIDE: FIXTURES GUIDE AND FILL-IN WALLCHART

Players to watch

Six Nations views:
pages 6 & 7

Focus on some of the men set to capture the headlines in the 2016 Six Nations

DYLAN HARTLEY England

Position: Hooker
Club: Northampton
Age: 29
Caps: 66
Height: 6ft 1in
Weight: 17st 5lb

All eyes will be on the New Zealand-born hooker – and not necessarily for the right reasons. There was plenty of disapproval when Eddie Jones made him England's new captain, despite more than a year of his career suspended. Hartley will need to be tough but fair to avoid further cries of dismay.



GAEL FICKOU France

Position: Centre
Club: Toulouse
Age: 24
Caps: 15
Height: 6ft 3in
Weight: 15st 8lb

Toulouse's hugely-gifted centre was unable to impose his talents on France's turgid game under former coach Philippe Saint-Andre. He has gone, though, and in comes Guy Noves, the man who discovered Fickou. The centre can profit from the absence of Toulon battering-ram Mathieu Bastareaud.



STUART McCLOSKEY Ireland

Position: Centre
Province: Ulster
Age: 23
Caps: 0
Height: 6ft 3in
Weight: 17st 11lb

Ulster's powerful centre has jumped from unknown to serious Test match contender in less than three years. A schoolboy soccer and golf star turned his hand to rugby after a late growth spurt. Now the free-running centre could add an extra dimension to an Irish midfield still missing Brian O'Driscoll.



SERGIO PARISSE Italy

Position: No.8
Club: Stade Francais
Age: 32
Caps: 114
Height: 6ft 5in
Weight: 17st 8lb

No matter how much Italy look to the future, they cannot do without Parisse's timeless class. In a squad boasting 10 uncapped rookies, the No.8 remains the top story. Injury robbed the World Cup of Parisse at anything like his best. Italy – and the Six Nations itself – will be poorer for any repeat.



GREIG LAIDLAW Scotland

Position: Scrum-half
Club: Gloucester
Age: 30
Caps: 46
Height: 5ft 9in
Weight: 12st 8lb

A goal-kicker and playmaker able to boss a match in the best Gallic traditions, without losing any of his gritty Scottish roots. As heartbroken as anyone at the controversial World Cup defeat to Australia final, Scotland's captain has proved central to coach Vern Cotter's wide-ranging overhaul.



DAN BIGGAR Wales

Position: Fly-half
Region: Ospreys
Age: 26
Caps: 39
Height: 6ft 1in
Weight: 14st 11lb

The globe chuckled at Biggar's tick-filled kicking routine at the start of the World Cup, but no one was laughing by the close. Not even Youtube videos of his 'Biggarena' goal-kicking approach could embarrass a man well and truly into his groove. Now the Ospreys man will again seek to pull the strings.



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Six Nations 2016

3

Preview

Your Six Nations fill-in wallchart: pages 4 & 5



Eddie Jones' arrival at Twickenham means it is the first time there are no home nations coaches in the championship

A new beginning

Northern hemisphere sides must start rebuilding now to challenge the best at Japan 2019

THE 2016 Six Nations championship cannot come soon enough for so many reasons.

It is an opportunity for Eddie Jones, the first foreign coach in England's rugby union history, to erase the memory of a shambolic World Cup performance, which saw the hosts depart at the group stage for the first time.

It is a chance for Wales to throw off the disappointment of their World Cup quarter-final defeat against South Africa and prove the damning words of pundit Stuart Barnes – "Wales are bred to win the Six Nations and not a lot else" – both right and wrong.

It is Ireland's chance to complete a hat-trick of titles after clinching last year's trophy on points difference from England and Wales, and Scotland's opportunity to break free of a desperate losing cycle which saw them fail to win a match in the Six Nations in 2012 and 2015.

Meanwhile, Italy will provide honest endeavour in their Roman base, while French fans will hope new coach Guy Noves can rediscover the panache of a side which

by Frank Malley

regressed into something resembling sporting torpor under Philippe Saint-Andre.

"I am not Zorro. I am not arriving with a magic wand," says Noves, which is true, but the bar was not set high by Saint-Andre, with France finishing fourth three times and also taking the wooden spoon once during his troubled reign.

The truth, however, is that the 2016 championship should not be about magic wands and quick fixes. It should be about steadily repositioning the northern rugby hemisphere in the game after a World Cup last autumn which proved the southern hemisphere was light years ahead in playing effective and entertaining rugby.

If the home nations want to win the big one in Japan in 2019, it means coaching back-row players to be as destructive as Australia's David Pocock at the breakdown, discovering deadly finishers to compete with All Blacks star Julian Savea, producing set-piece precision and three-quarters with flair.

It means each coach in the Six Nations has a decision to

make. Is the next match the big one, the only one that counts, or is it just another stepping stone on the way to delivering a team capable of beating the best in four years' time?

Jones has the toughest job. England have the most cash and players. Inevitably, expectations are higher and often unrealistic.

Jones knows that. He has worked at Saracens as well as taking Australia to the 2003 World Cup final and helping

South Africa win it in 2007. He knows England require more precision, better organisation and selection, more bite than under Stuart Lancaster.

It is why Dylan Hartley is back, a talismanic hooker who can hook and throw straight, something England sorely missed at the World Cup. It is why England's squad is filled with hungry, emerging, uncapped talent, such as 21-year-old Maro Itoje.

Tellingly, for the first time since the home championships were instituted in 1883, the tournament is devoid of a head coach from the home nations.

It is certain, however, that the three New Zealanders, Warren Gatland with Wales, Vern Cotter with Scotland and Ireland's Joe Schmidt, will be out to make life a misery for England's Australian coach.

Gatland and Schmidt go head to head on the opening weekend, when the contest could hinge on the battle between Irish fly-half Jonathan Sexton and Wales' Dan Biggar.

Sexton outshone Biggar in Leinster's recent victory over the Ospreys, and the Irish playmaker will be on a mission to do the same again, driven by

a yearning to rectify his side's World Cup shortcomings in the quarter-final defeat to Argentina. "The World Cup was the biggest disappointment of my career," said Sexton.

"I was playing well and then got a niggly injury at a bad time. It took me a few weeks to get over it physically and mentally."

The smart money says the winners in Dublin, probably Ireland under new captain Rory Best, will go on to take the title.

Cotter's mission is to build on Scotland's impressive resilience at the World Cup. Expect more galloping surges from No.8 David Denton, while brothers Jonny and Richie Gray are in fine form and provide fuel aplenty in the engine room. Importantly, Scotland also have centre Alex Dunbar back from injury. Anything but bottom would be improvement for Scotland, but this time they promise more and England could face the stiffest of tests on the opening Saturday.

For the northern hemisphere's sake, however, this time there is more at stake than local rivalry. The rugby on show must not lose sight of Japan in 2019.

Six Nations by numbers

4 The number of different Six Nations title winners (England, France, Wales and Ireland).

5 France's record number of Six Nations titles.

35 Jonny Wilkinson's record for the most number of points scored by one player in a Six Nations game.

65 Former Ireland captain Brian O'Driscoll's record for the most number of Six Nations appearances.

26 O'Driscoll's Six Nations record for the most number of tries scored by one player.

80 England's record total for the most number of points scored in one Six Nations game.

557 The record total of points scored by former Ireland fly-half Ronan O'Gara (below) in the Six Nations.



13 The number of years since England won a Six Nations Grand Slam.

19 Welshman Leigh Halfpenny's record for the most number of penalties kicked in one Six Nations season.

55 England's number of Six Nations wins since the tournament began in 2000.

67 The number of defeats suffered by Italy during their Six Nations history.

6 The number of times that Irishmen have been named Six Nations player of the tournament.

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Six Nations 2016 wallchart

ROUND 1

Saturday 6 February, 2.25pm, Stade de France

BBC1

France

Italy

Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: JP Doyle (Eng)

Assistants: George Clancy (Ire), Federico Anselmi (Arg)

TMO: Graham Hughes (Eng)

Saturday 6 February, 4.50pm, Murrayfield

BBC1

Scotland

England

Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: John Lacey (Ire)

Assistants: Romain Poite (Fra), Stuart Berry (SA)

TMO: George Ayoub (Aus)

Sunday 7 February, 3pm, Aviva Stadium

ITV

Ireland

Wales

Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Jerome Garces (Fra)


Assistants: Glen Jackson, Ben O'Keefe (both NZ)

TMO: Graham Hughes (Eng)



France and Italy kick off this year's Six Nations

ROUND 2



Wales' first home game is against Scotland on Feb 13

Saturday 13 February, 2.25pm, Stade de France

BBC1

France

Ireland

Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Jaco Peyper (SA)

Assistants: Nigel Owens (Wales), Stuart Berry (SA)

TMO: George Ayoub (Aus)

Saturday 13 February, 4.50pm, Principality Stadium

BBC1

Wales

Scotland

Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: George Clancy (Ire)

Assistants: John Lacey (Ire), Federico Anselmi (Arg)

TMO: Graham Hughes (Eng)

Sunday 14 February, 2pm, Stadio Olimpico

ITV

Italy

England

Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Glen Jackson (NZ)

Assistants: Jerome Garces (Fra), Ben O'Keefe (NZ)

TMO: George Ayoub (Aus)

ROUND 3

Friday, 26 February, 8.05pm, Principality Stadium

BBC1

Wales

France

Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Wayne Barnes (Eng)

Assistants: JP Doyle, Luke Pearce (both Eng)

TMO: Shaun Veldsman (SA)

Saturday, 27 February, 2.25pm, Stadio Olimpico

ITV

Italy

Scotland

Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Jaco Peyper (SA)

Assistants: Pascal Gauzere (Fra), Nick Briant (NZ)

TMO: Graham Hughes (Eng)

Saturday, 27 February, 4.50pm, Twickenham

ITV

England

Ireland

Tries

Cons


Pens

DGs

Referee: Romain Poite (Fra)

Assistants: Nigel Owens (Wal), Alexandre Ruiz (Fra)

TMO: Shaun Veldsman (SA)



Champions Ireland go to Twickenham on Feb 27

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ROUND 4



Wales and England do battle on March 12

Saturday, 12 March, 1.30pm, Aviva Stadium



Ireland

Italy



Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Angus Gardner (Aus)
Assistants: Romain Poite (Fra), Marius van der Westhuizen (SA)
TMO: George Ayoub (Aus)

Saturday, 12 March, 4pm, Twickenham



England

Wales



Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Craig Joubert (SA)
Assistants: Jerome Garces (Fra), Mathieu Raynal (Fra)
TMO: Ben Skeen (NZ)

Sunday, 13 March, 3pm, Murrayfield



Scotland

France



Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Glen Jackson (NZ)
Assistants: Wayne Barnes (Eng), Marius Mitrea (Ita)
TMO: Ben Skeen (NZ)

ROUND 5

Saturday, 19 March, 2.30pm, Principality Stadium



Wales

Italy



Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Romain Poite (Fra)
Assistants: Wayne Barnes (Eng), Marius van der Westhuizen (SA)
TMO: George Ayoub (Aus)

Saturday, 19 March, 5pm, Aviva Stadium



Ireland

Scotland



Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Pascal Gauzere (Fra)
Assistants: Craig Joubert (SA), Alexandre Ruiz (Fra)
TMO: Shaun Veldsman (SA)

Saturday, 19 March, 8pm, Stade de France



France

England



Tries

Cons

Pens

DGs

Referee: Nigel Owens (Wal)
Assistants: John Lacey (Ire), Leighton Hodges (Wal)
TMO: Ben Skeen (NZ)



Ireland again bring down the curtain against Scotland

Wide-open race makes for thriller

by Andrew Baldock

WALES boss Warren Gatland summed it up perfectly when he described this season's Six Nations as having "a little bit of uncertainty" surrounding it.

Predictably, the bookmakers have installed England as tournament favourites, with Italy odds-on for yet another wooden spoon.

But perhaps for the first time in Six Nations history, there are possibly five countries holding genuine title aspirations.

Two challengers – England and France – are under the direction of new head coaches in Eddie Jones and Guy Noves, respectively, while Ireland are chasing a title hat-trick never previously been accomplished.

Wales, meanwhile, should be buoyed by a Six Nations trend of them winning a Grand Slam immediately after a World Cup (2007 and 2011), while Scotland, possibly still reeling from the injustice of their World Cup exit in October, look in excellent shape.

And what better opportunity could they have wished for to make a statement than on day one, when England arrive at Murrayfield and the Calcutta Cup takes centre-stage.

It offers an immediate fierce examination for Jones, who succeeded Stuart Lancaster in England's coaching hot-seat following a World Cup debacle when the host nation suffered a pool stage exit and packed their bags with indecent haste.

Jones has already made his mark with seven uncapped players in his 33-man elite squad, while also appointing serial offender Dylan Hartley (*below*), who has spent more than a year of his rugby career banned, as captain.

If the players match their coach's boldness, a first Six Nations crown since 2011 could be on its way.

Reigning champions Ireland go into battle without one of European rugby's all-time greats after Paul O'Connell's international retirement, while injuries will deprive them of outstanding talent like Tommy Bowe, Iain

Henderson and Peter O'Mahony.

As ever, fly-half Jonathan Sexton holds the tactical and operational controls, but for Ireland – and Wales – so much would appear to hinge on their opening weekend meeting.

The winners of that Dublin encounter will be up and running and, in Wales' case, would mean them having a win in the bank with three home games to come at the newly-named Principality Stadium.

Wales have lost injured backs Leigh Halfpenny and Rhys Webb for the tournament, but powerful centre Jonathan Davies is back after missing the World Cup and there is a tried and tested look to their pack, with players such as Sam Warburton, Alun-Wyn Jones and Taulupe Faletau.

Wales, unquestionably, need more variation in their attacking game, yet if they can overcome a tendency to be slow starters, a fourth Six Nations title of Gatland's reign appears eminently possible.

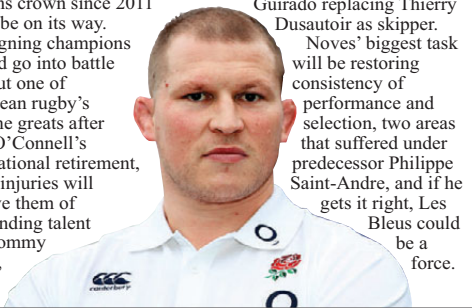
Scotland, whitewashed in last season's Six Nations, displayed many green shoots of revival during the World Cup when, had Lady Luck smiled on them, a semi-final place at least would have been reached.

Their opening two games – England at home, Wales in Cardiff – will set the tone for Vern Cotter's men, but Scotland are serious dark horses for a tournament they have never previously won.

Italy, whose coach Jacques Brunel looks set to make way for Conor O'Shea at the end of this season, appear off the pace, which leaves France, now led by Noves, with Guilhem

Guirado replacing Thierry Dusautoir as skipper.

Noves' biggest task will be restoring consistency of performance and selection, two areas that suffered under predecessor Philippe Saint-Andre, and if he gets it right, Les Bleus could be a force.



LIKE 'NEXT SET PIECE' AND 'NEXT LINE OUT'

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Player focus

Six Nations betting guide: page 8

Back row of the moves

IF Jack Clifford gets his wish, the destination of the 2016 Six Nations trophy might hinge on an act of daylight robbery.

The 22-year-old Harlequins man could make his senior England debut against Scotland after building a reputation as a ball stealer, that new breed of back-row practitioner who have turned the grunt and groan of winning possession in rugby's dark places at the breakdown into something of an art form.

Think All Blacks captain Richie McCaw or Australia's David Pocock and Michael Hooper, whose ripping work at the World Cup led coaches, especially from the northern hemisphere, to reappraise how to win a rugby match.

The chances are that Clifford could get his opportunity from the bench against Scotland, but whenever and wherever Clifford ends up pulling on the

by Frank Malley

white jersey, he is determined to set his personal bar high.

"I enjoy playing at No.6, 7 or 8. They're all very similar nowadays. It's good to be able to do all of them," said Clifford, before revealing how McCaw, Pocock and Hooper had influenced his ambitions. "They set the standard at the World Cup. They brought the breakdown to the forefront of the game. It's a skill-set that's necessary across the back row.

"Everyone in the back row needs to be able to steal the ball now. Since I was 18, it's something I've focused on."

Clifford, born in Brisbane to ex-pat parents and holder of British and Australian passports after moving to Surrey when he was three, captained England Under-20s to World Cup glory.

He has played in all three

positions across the back row for Harlequins since his first team debut in 2012, and his emergence in the England squad, along with others such as 21-year-old Maro Itoje and Josh Beaumont, 22, shows head coach Eddie Jones wants to embed youth and change in a side which needs to establish a fresh identity following the World Cup debacle.

This Six Nations, however, is blessed with some star back-row performers.

Look no further than Sam Warburton and Taulupe Faletau of Wales, the latter having demonstrated his inspiration during the World Cup at the rear of a struggling scrum. Faletau was forced to pick up the ball on numerous occasions and forge his way beyond the gain line to wrest an advantage.

His collision with Ireland's Jamie Heaslip on the first

weekend promises to be one of the head-to-head highlights of the Six Nations.

Heaslip has been a fixture in Ireland's side for almost a decade as their undisputed No.8 and a swashbuckling presence in the loose. This year, for the first time, he could face serious competition from Munster's in-form CJ Stander, but Heaslip is not the sort to shirk a challenge and, as Ireland vice-captain to Rory Best, he will be key, especially with the Irish having lost their talismanic forward and skipper Paul O'Connell to retirement.

Scotland's David Denton also falls into the bracket of potential superhero.

He was instrumental in providing Scotland with galloping momentum during the World Cup.

His ball-carrying was the catalyst for many of Scotland's

three-quarter forays on their way to the cusp of the semi-finals. If Denton can replicate that form in the Six Nations, Scotland must surely improve on their pointless display last time.

Even so, none of the above can claim to be in quite the same league as Italy No.8 Sergio Parisse. The Stade Francais man has it all: speed, quick hands, positional astuteness and the authority on a rugby field which is the preserve of the true greats.

A measure of his greatness is that he has forged such a reputation while propping up a steadily emerging Italy side.

Watching up close and playing against such characters is the perfect rugby education for the likes of Clifford, which is why Jones has been brave but also shrewd to pack his squad with youngsters.



Jack Clifford

"I am looking for attitude," said Jones. "How desperate someone is to become a better player. Players need to be able to learn. They need to be bright in rugby."

Stealing the limelight by stealing the ball surely fits snugly into that category.



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Six Nations 2016

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Six Nations views

 Test your Six Nations knowledge: page 8

The only way is up

We are in third tier of European rugby, admits new coach

by Duncan Bech

EDDIE JONES plans to lift England out of the lower tier of European rugby after leaving his players shocked over the nation's lack of success since their finest hour in 2003.

Jones has been entrusted with the task of reviving England's fortunes after last autumn's dismal group exit from the home World Cup marked a low point in the country's rugby history.

The quest begins with the Six Nations, and a scan down the championship's roll of honour has left Jones in little doubt that England have been punching well below their weight for over a decade.

Since Martin Johnson lifted the Webb Ellis Cup in 2003, they have celebrated only one title – in 2011 as the highlight of Johnson's time as manager – while Wales, Ireland and France have shared the other crowns over the last 12 years.

Jones believes reversing a culture where players have been happy to collect caps rather than honours is critical to instigating a change in results.

"There's a big difference between playing for England and winning for England," he said. "If you want to win for England, you have to strive every day to be a better player."

"Maybe in the past it has been just enough to win a cap without winning, and the



England players celebrate winning the 2011 Six Nations, their only success in the tournament since the World Cup triumph of 2003

results would certainly indicate that. When I showed the players the Six Nations results and where we are ranked since 2003, I think they were relatively shocked.

"It means at the moment we are in tier three of Europe. In the bottom three teams."

"To change that is about three per cent – but that three per cent is hard, because it is doing all the things you don't want to do."

Jones believes the route back to the top lies in restoring the snarl to the forwards – the traditional source of England's strength – who have lost their edge under previous regimes.

"We want a team with an uncompromising feel about it," said Jones, who has made the controversial decision of naming Dylan Hartley as captain for the Six Nations.

"We need to change English rugby and get back to what the

rest of the world fears about English rugby, and that's forward play.

"When I was coaching Australia against England, if we could get parity in the scrum and maul, we knew we could win the game. We need to get back to that English style of play that's based on a strong scrum, driving maul, an uncompromising clean-out."

"If we can get our forward pack right, what other team in

the world can play against that sort of game? And then we need a back-line that can use the ball. It would be a unique style of rugby, and that's what we've got to aim for."

"We are not aiming to be a New Zealand photocopy, we're not aiming to be an Australian photocopy – we're aiming to be England. And that's about being uncompromising in the forwards, and to get the crowd singing at Twickenham."

McCloskey ready to make big impression

STUART McCLOSKEY was mistaken for a second row when he first pitched up at Ulster training as an unknown 20-year-old.

Fast forward only three years and Ulster's top stars insist it would be no error to hand the wrecking-ball centre his Test debut in the Six Nations.

The 6ft 3in, 17st McCloskey's "freakish" size and "full package" of skills have had team-mate Luke Marshall purring, and Ireland coach Joe Schmidt taking serious notice.

"When we first saw him at Ulster, a few people assumed he was a second row," said Marshall. "He's far bigger than any other centre at Ulster."

"I think he's probably got about 15 kilos on any other centre. And in Ireland, let alone Ulster, that's freakish – we just don't make centres that big."

"So when we realised he was a centre, there was initially a bit of surprise. But he quickly showed what he's all about and how damaging he can be. Yes he's got the size, but he's also got the skills to back that up."



Stuart McCloskey

Lamont rues Scots' lack of self-belief

SEAN LAMONT is fed up of seeing Scotland run out to face their rivals with defeat already etched across their faces before a ball is kicked.

The father figure of Vern Cotter's squad believes the natural pessimism that comes with being born into this rain-soaked corner of the earth has done his nation down.

Asked to explain why the Scots have waited 17 years since their last title, when the competition was still a five-team affair, he said: "There are many reasons and

unfortunately not many are an easy fix. But the biggest one for me is a lack of confidence and self-belief."

"Man for man, we've got an equally talented group of players, but people always expect us to lose. When everybody writes you off, sometimes these things creep in. It's a Scottish trait. We're very humble and self-deprecating as a nation."

"It doesn't matter who you are. If you're the best player in the world but lack confidence, you'll never do well."

Wales are born to run, promises Howley

WARREN GATLAND'S squad go into battle as serious title contenders, especially with three out of four games being at home following their opening weekend clash against Ireland in Dublin.

Wales were crowned Six Nations champions – in Grand Slam fashion on both occasions – immediately following the 2007 and 2011 World Cup campaigns, so with last year's global spectacular still fresh in the memory, it suggests another major push for silverware.

Gatland has chosen a 37-man squad that mixes tried and tested names with some exciting fresh talent, although they are without injured key men like full-back Leigh Halfpenny, scrum-half Rhys Webb and centre Scott Williams.

But Gatland has selected 31 players who were involved in the World Cup, a tournament that saw Wales beat England, Fiji and Uruguay to progress from the tournament's toughest group, before suffering a quarter-final exit when South Africa scrum-half Fourie du Preez's late try delivered a knockout blow.

Since Gatland took charge of Wales for the 2008 Six Nations, he has overseen three title successes, and reached a World Cup semi-final and quarter-final.

The 2015 World Cup saw an exciting running rugby brand adopted by many teams, and Wales attack coach Rob Howley says that will continue.

He said: "We want to pass and create space in the outside channels. We did it in the World Cup – look at the try against England in the final 10 minutes when we passed to the outside channel – and we will continue to work on that. We are looking for the ability to scan – one more pass to get into the wide channel – and we will be looking this campaign to get into space."

After tackling Ireland, Wales return to Cardiff for appointments with Scotland and France, then it is England at Twickenham before finishing off on home soil against Italy.

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Six Nations betting

Wales ready to show it's not the end of the world

Why Gatland's men can upset favourites England

Odds guide

Outright winners	Unibet
England	7-4
Wales	3-1
Ireland	13-4
France	5-1
Scotland	12-1
Italy	500-1
Top points scorer	Unibet
Dan Biggar (Wales)	9-4
Jonathan Sexton (Ire)	47-20
Owen Farrell (Eng)	5-2
Greig Laidlaw (Scot)	5-1
Morgan Parra (France)	6-1
George Ford (Eng)	8-1
Jean-Marc Doussain (France)	20-1
Ian Madigan (Ire)	28-1

WALES are past masters at turning World Cup heartache into Six Nations delight, and can do so again.

Four years ago, Warren Gatland's side partially made up for their disappointment at finishing fourth in the World Cup in New Zealand by sweeping all before them to win a Six Nations grand slam.

And they also cleaned up in 2008, having failed to reach the knockout stages of the World Cup in France.

So a precedent has been set, with Unibet offering 3-1 that Wales will pip favourites England (7-4) to the title and 7-1 that they complete the grand slam.

Wales, marshalled by Mr Consistent Dan Biggar at

by Jim Wiltshire

No.10, have the advantage of playing three of their five games at home, so much will depend on their opening tussle against Ireland in Dublin.

Joe Schmidt's Irish (13-4) retained the title last year after a dramatic end to the tournament, when England narrowly failed to score enough points against France, despite winning 55-35.

And they should have talisman Jonathan Sexton raring to go after his disappointing showing against Argentina in the World Cup. He is second favourite at 47-20 to finish as top points scorer.

New coach Eddie Jones has his work cut out to make



Dan Biggar is 9-4 favourite to finish as top scorer

England a force again after the World Cup embarrassment under Stuart Lancaster.

Even the opening Calcutta Cup match against perennial wooden spoonists Scotland at Murrayfield could prove their undoing, especially if coach Vern Cotter can get the Scots

playing the way they did in last year's 35-34 defeat to Australia in the World Cup quarter-finals.

With France (5-1) also playing under a new coach in Guy Noves, there are bound to be surprises along the way.

But my money's on the Welsh to finish top of the pile.

Six Nations quiz

- 1 In which year did Italy join the tournament to make it Six Nations?
- 2 Who was player of the tournament last year?
- 3 Italy, Scotland France have all taken the wooden spoon. Which other country has finished bottom of the table in the Six Nations?
- 4 Name the trophy given to the winners of the England v Ireland matches.
- 5 Three of this year's coaches were born in New Zealand. Name them.
- 6 The first championship was played in 1883. How many times have England won it?
- 7 Who holds the record for the most points scored in a Six Nations match?
- 8 Which teams cannot win the Triple Crown?
- 9 How many Grand Slams did Wales win in the 1970s?
- 10 Who holds the record for scoring the most tries in the Six Nations?

ANSWERS

- 1 2000; 2 Paul O'Connell; 3 Wales; 4 Millennium Trophy; 5 Warren Gatland, Vern Cotter and Joe Schmidt; 6 26; 7 Jonny Wilkinson (35) v Italy in 2001; 8 France and Italy; 9 Three; 10 Brian O'Driscoll (26)

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If there is more than one winner the jackpot will be shared and, similarly, if there is more than one runner-up the nearest miss prize will also be shared.

RESULTS



CLOSING DATE FOR POSTAL ENTRIES
Thursday
9am,
4 February,
2016
Names of winners will be published on
Saturday,
6 February
or Sunday 7
February 2016

Winners

Competition number **S03**

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J Duncan, Dorset

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1. You are allowed a minimum of 60 crosses and a maximum of 450 per coupon. Coupons with 451 or more will be disqualified. Entries altered defaced or mutilated will be invalid. Crosses must be distinct and separate. 2. Competitors may submit as many coupons as they wish. Members of a family can send their entries in one envelope with a covering postal order or cheque. 3. No responsibility can be accepted for entries delayed, lost or mislaid. Proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. 4. Payment may be made by postal order or cheque for the correct amount payable to Newsquest, and crossed 'S Co.' Stamps **will not** be accepted in payment. 5. A competitor cannot win more than one share of the prize money across all titles each week. 6. The Editor's decision on winning entry or entries and matters relating to this competition is binding in honour only. NO CORRESPONDENCE CAN BE ENTERED INTO. 7. Employees of NEWSQUEST Media Group and subsidiary companies and members of their families are not eligible to enter the competition. 8. Address entries to FTB, Newspaper House, Test Lane, Southampton, SO16 9JX in a sealed envelope. Understamped entries are not accepted. 9. Prize monies are held for and on behalf of winners. 10. Do not send cash in the post. 11. Winners will be required to participate in publicity. 12. Photocopies not accepted. 13. For rules go to www.dailyecho.co.uk/promotions/rules. 14. If you pay by cheque your prize money will be paid to you once cheque has cleared.

An incident in a Eastleigh v Southampton match

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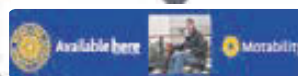


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Manchester United 0 Saints 1 - picture special



Oriol Romeu fires in a shot at goal.



Charlie Austin's goal celebration



Charlie Austin (hidden) heads the winner on his Saints debut.



Charlie Austin, Shane Long and James Ward-Prowse at the final whistle.



Ronald Koeman greets Charlie Austin with a smile at the final whistle.



Referee Michael Jones checks on Shane Long after he takes a knock.

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Saints fans outside Old Trafford before last weekend's victory.

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Uplifting tale of Hollie's Ironman bid

Hollie's Road to Kona

By Hollie Craddock

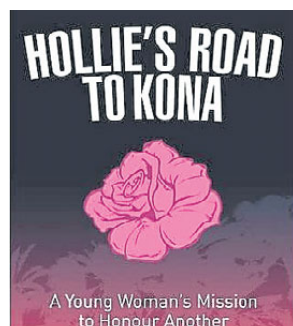
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AS IS evident from the increased number of joggers, power walkers and cyclists pounding the pavements and roads, we're in January, a time when millions of people are driven by a laudable desire to improve themselves. They've already cut back on the booze and now they seek improved fitness, or weight loss, or simply believe the time has come to get serious about exercise.

John Barrow's line, "If you never try, you'll never know what you're capable of", will resonate with these folks as they push themselves in pursuit of improved health and who knows what other goals.

It certainly rings clear in Hollie Craddock's engrossing book, which tells of two separate motivations, one planned, the other the result of a family tragedy, and because we discover very early what that is, the story, while inspirational, is riven with sadness.

Hollie's tale begins in Tenby, in South Wales, as she prepares to experience the 'washing machine effect', the ungainly-looking (but individually effective) opening section of the triathlon – a 2.4 mile swim – for the first



time. Following the dip in the river Severn, ahead lies a 112-mile bike ride, after which she can look for ward to a punishing marathon. As Hollie prepares to take the plunge, she reflects that the prospect of pushing herself to the limit has cost her a £450 entry fee, "all in the name of fun".

There are few books in which the author achieves their ambition within the first few pages, but having realised her dream of becoming an 'ironman' following a gruelling 17-hour triathlon, Ms Craddock appears home and dry. Until she is told of the untimely death of her niece, Rosie. It is at this point that the reason for the book's sub-title, "A young woman's mission to honour another by qualifying for the Ironman World Championship" becomes clear.

Only three years separated Hollie from Rosie. They were more like sisters than auntie and niece and, like most sisters, they shared their dreams, secrets and aspirations. Hollie's principal motivation is what drives her inspirational tale. It's filled with heartbreak, depression and debilitating setbacks, as well as details of a gruelling training schedule, but ultimately, it's an uplifting story of what can be done when you set your mind to it – as any one of those people you see pounding the pavement in sweaty trainers would confirm.

The big shocks in a

THE 2015/16 Premier League season has turned out to be the most unpredictable of all time.

The likes of defending champions Chelsea, Manchester United and Liverpool are currently outside the Champions League places, *writes SIMON CARTER.*

Leicester City – Leicester City! – are still top of the table as we prepare to enter February.

Crystal Palace, West Ham and Stoke all harbour hopes of finishing in the Europa League positions.

Following three straight wins, we can now add Saints' name to that list as well.

Here, the Sports Pink turns the spotlight on the most topsy-turvy results of a topsy-turvy top flight season.

August 9 - Arsenal 0 West Ham 2

The Hammers had already played six competitive games – in the Europa League – prior to their shock opening day league win at The Emirates.

Having bowed out of Europe against little known Romanians Astra Giurgiu, Slaven Bilic's men stunned Arsenal and ruined keeper Petr Cech's league debut.

Cheikhou Kouyate and Mauro Zarate netted on a day which ended with the Gunners being booed off by sections of their own supporters.

It was a surprise result, for sure, but bigger shocks would come...

August 22 - West Ham 3 Bournemouth 4

The Bournemouth success story was proof positive there is still room for romance at the highest level of English football.

The Dorset club claimed their maiden Premier League victory in a seven-goal thriller at Upton Park.

Callum Wilson, a striker Bournemouth had signed from the third division, struck a hat-trick in the memorable success.

His first two goals helped Cherries into a 2-0 half-time lead, before the hosts levelled through Mark Noble (penalty) and Cheikhou Kouyate.

Marc Pugh restored Cherries' lead before the Hammers were reduced to 10 men with the dismissal of full back Carl Jenkinson.

Wilson completed his treble from the penalty spot – Jenkinson having seen red for giving away the spot-kick.

Modibo Maiga set up a tense finish for Eddie Howe's side by scoring eight minutes from time.

August 29 - Liverpool 0 West Ham 3

So how did West Ham get over the shock of conceding four goals at home to 'little' Bournemouth?

They went to Anfield and inflicted on Liverpool one of their heaviest home defeats for several years!

Manuel Lanzini struck after only three minutes, and it was 2-0 before the half hour mark thanks to Mark



Graziano Pelle's goal celebration after scoring Saints' third goal at Stamford Bridge



Saints midfielder Steven Davis has just levelled at Stamford Bridge last October

Noble.

Both sides were reduced to 10 men after the break – Philippe Coutinho for the hosts and Noble for the Hammers – before Diafra Sakho completed a shock win a minute from time.

August 29 - Chelsea 1 Crystal Palace 2

While West Ham's result at Anfield was a great one, it was overshadowed by Palace's success at Stamford Bridge.

After all, Jose Mourinho hardly ever loses a home league game.

The Portuguese didn't suffer a

single Stamford Bridge loss in his first spell in charge of the Blues. And prior to Palace's visit, his only league loss at home – in 99 games – had come against Sunderland towards the end of the 2013/14 season.

Bakary Sako gave Alan Pardew's men a 65th minute lead, with Radamel Falcao levelling 11 minutes from time.

That was not the cue for the defending champions to go on and win, though. Instead, Joel Ward struck Palace's shock winner just two minutes later.

August 30 - Swansea 2 Manchester United 1

And the shocks kept on coming!

After Juan Mata had put United in front, the hosts hit back through Ande Ayew and Bafetimbi Gomis to record their third straight league win against Louis Van Gaal's United.

The Dutchman might have thought it would not get much worse after this.

He was wrong.

September 19 - Manchester City 1 West Ham 2

Another virtually seismic away

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remarkable season



Charlie Austin's goal celebration with James Ward-Prowse and Shane Long after scoring on his debut



Charlie Austin, Daley Blind and Adnan Januzaj at Old Trafford last weekend

win for the Hammers.

In recent years, City's home record has always been among the best in the top flight. But they found themselves 2-0 down after only 31 minutes following goals from Victor Moses and Diafra Sakho.

Record signing Kevin De Bruyne pulled one back on the stroke of half-time.

October 3 - Chelsea 1 Southampton 3

Saints became only the side second in over a decade to score three goals in a league game where Jose Mourinho was in the home dug-

out.

Willian thrust the hosts into a tenth minute lead, but Saints refused to surrender. Steven Davis levelled before half-time, setting the scene for Sadio Mane and Graziano Pelle to pile the agony on Mourinho in the last half hour.

November 8 - Liverpool 1 Crystal Palace 2

As with their win at Stamford Bridge at the end of August, Palace scored an 82nd minute decider - defender Scott Dann on target.

Yannick Bolasie had fired the Eagles in front, with Philippe Coutin-

ho equalising just before half-time.

December 5 - Chelsea 0 Bournemouth 1

Possibly the most amazing result of a gloriously unpredictable Premier League season. Glenn Murray had only been on the pitch two minutes when he netted Cherries' 82nd minute winner which piled the pressure on home boss Jose Mourinho.

December 12 - Bournemouth 2 Manchester United 1

A week on from their amazing win at Stamford Bridge, Cherries claimed another high-profile scalp.

Junior Stanislas opened the scoring after just two minutes, with Marouane Fellaini levelling on 24 minutes. Cherries grabbed a winner through Josh King nine minutes into the second half, to pile the pressure on Louis Van Gaal following United's Champions League exit.

December 13 - Tottenham 1 Newcastle 2

Mauricio Pochettino's high-fliers had managed to avoid being on the receiving end of a shock result ... until this one.

Unbeaten in the league since the opening day of the season, Tottenham conceded twice late on against a lowly Magpies outfit.

Eric Dier gave the hosts an interval lead, and the game was going to form until Aleksander Mitrovic levelled 16 minutes from time.

Spanish striker Ayoze Perez then popped up with a 90th minute winner.

December 14 - Leicester 2 Chelsea 1

By this stage, many pundits were predicting that Leicester's bubble had to burst soon.

A game against the defending champions, live on Sky on a Monday night, could be the moment it all started to go wrong.

It didn't.

Goals from Leicester's prolific pair Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez put Claudio Ranieri's Foxes 2-0 up against his former employers.

Loic Remy grabbed a 77th minute consolation as Chelsea suffered a remarkable ninth loss in 16 league games.

December 19 - Manchester United 1 Norwich 2

The lowly Canaries inflicted a first home league loss of the season on Louis Van Gaal's side.

The visitors stormed into a shock 2-0 lead through Cameron Jerome and Alexander Tettey prior to Anthony Martial's consolation.

United had only conceded one league goal at home prior to this defeat.

December 20 - Watford 3 Liverpool 0

The Hornets had already confounded many critics by the time Jurgen Klopp brought Liverpool to Hertfordshire.

But it was still a major surprise that Watford stroled to such a comfortable victory. Nathan Ake opened the scoring after only three minutes, and top scorer Odion Ighalo doubled the lead in the 15th minute.

Ighalo netted again five minutes from time.

January 23 - Manchester United 0 Saints 1

Even though United have come in for huge criticism this season, and Saints entered the game having won their previous two games, this was still a surprise result.

Debutant Charlie Austin was the match-winner, repaying a good chunk of a potentially bargain £4m transfer fee with the only goal after coming on as a late substitute.

Timeline of new skipper's indiscipline

DYLAN Hartley has been named as England's captain for the RBS 6 Nations.

The Northampton hooker missed last summer's World Cup after being axed from England's training squad when he was hit with a four-week ban for a headbutting offence during the Aviva Premiership semi-finals.

That was one of a series of on-field disciplinary issues that have blighted the 29-year-old's career, with his various suspensions seeing Hartley banned for a total of 54 weeks.

Here, the Sports Pink details Hartley's brushes with the rugby union establishment.

● April 2007 - banned for 26 weeks after being cited for eye-gouging Wasps forwards James Haskell and Jonny O'Connor.

● March 2012 - received an eight-week suspension after being cited for biting Ireland forward Stephen Ferris' finger while playing for England in a Six Nations game.

● December 2012 - banned for two weeks after being cited for punching Ulster hooker Rory Best during a Heineken Cup match.

● May 2013 - sent off for verbally abusing referee Wayne Barnes during the Premiership final against Leicester at Twickenham. Received an 11-week



New England captain Dylan Hartley

suspension that sidelined him for the British and Irish Lions tour to Australia which he had been selected for.

● December 2014 - sent off for elbowing Leicester centre Matt Smith in the face. Banned for three weeks.

● May 2015 - banned for four weeks after headbutting Saracens' Jamie George in Northampton's 29-24 Premiership semi-final defeat to Saracens. As a direct consequence, England ruled Hartley out of their World Cup plans.

Dylan Hartley's career in numbers

66 - the number of caps Hartley has accumulated during his seven years as an England player.

54 - the total number of weeks for which Hartley has been banned.

26 - the longest suspension Hartley has served. In 2007 he was found to have eye-gouged James Haskell and Johnny O'Connor.

3 - the number of major rugby events Hartley has missed due to being banned. He sat out the 2007 World Cup, 2013 British and Irish Lions tour to Australia and the 2015 World Cup.

16 - the age at which Hartley moved from New Zealand to England.

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Do England keep Alex at top of order?

ALEX Hales' miserable tour of South Africa has once again brought England's failure to find a long-term opening partner for captain Alastair Cook back into sharp focus.

Hales became the eighth person to open alongside Cook since Andrew Strauss' retirement in 2012, but the Nottinghamshire batsman finished his maiden Test series with an average of 17.

Here, Press Association Sport looks at England's options ahead of their next Test assignment against Sri Lanka, with the first of two matches starting at Headingley on May 19.

STICK WITH HALES

Hales was expected to add a touch of flair to a top order also containing the more defensive-minded Cook and Nick Compton. But the 27-year-old's weakness outside off-stump was consistently exploited by the Proteas, stunting his natural attacking game, and he finished with a lower strike rate than Cook.

MOVE COMPTON UP THE ORDER

Of the eight men tried and tested alongside Cook, it is arguably Strauss' initial replacement Compton who made the best impression with two centuries in New Zealand before he was



Under pressure: England batsman Alex Hales.

discarded in 2013 after a limp showing in the return series, particularly at Headingley. The Middlesex batsman returned to the fray at number three against South Africa although he fizzled out following a game-changing, if unspectacular, 85 in the first Test at Durban and ended the series with an average just above 30.

ANYBODY ELSE?

England seem to have reached the end of the conveyor belt of credible alternatives, with Hales following in the footsteps of Compton, Joe Root, Michael Carberry, Sam Robson, Jonathan Trott, Adam Lyth and Moeen Ali in failing to make a compelling case for their continued inclusion as opener. While Hales is still the man in possession, Robson and Lyth can come again but would need to push their claims with a significant amount of runs in the Championship.

Alex Lees struggled for form at Yorkshire last year and while Durham's Mark Stoneman passed 1,000 championship runs for the third season in a row in 2015, the left-hander averaged just 34.06.

Daniel Bell-Drummond, 22, and Tom Abell, 21, are highly rated on the county circuit but may need to strive for consistency before expecting either to flourish on the international stage.

Reborn Bulls rising

HEARD the one about the game in the ninth tier of English football last weekend that attracted a bigger crowd than once watched a Premier League game?

Seriously, it's true, writes **SI-MON CARTER**.

The reborn Hereford FC were watched by a crowd of 4,026 last Saturday.

Top of the Midland Premier League – the same rung of the pyramid as the Sydenhams Wessex League – Hereford were welcoming second placed Alvechurch to Edgar Street.

That was a bigger crowd than the one which turned up at Selhurst Park in January 1992 – in the first season of the rebranded Premier League – to watch Wimbledon beat Everton 3-1. The attendance that night – though it was more of a gathering really – was a paltry 3,039.

How times have changed.

Hereford entered last weekend's game on the back of a staggering 27-match winning streak in league and cup competitions, stretching back to last August.

But the bumper crowd – and 4,000 at a level populated by the likes of Cowes Sports and Fawley certainly deserves to be described as 'bumper' – did not see a 28th straight victory.

Instead, Hereford were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw.

Nevertheless, this season's events at a ground where Saints once played a Football League Second Division game are truly heart-warming.

After all, the crowd for the Alvechurch visit – which was bigger than several in League 1 and League 2 on the same day – wasn't even Hereford's highest of the season.

That was the attendance of over 4,300 which turned up to watch the Boxing Day derby with Westfield.

A similar scenario is being played out in the Wessex League.

Salisbury are another club whose fortunes rival those of Hereford in so many ways.

Now the scene could be set for a mouthwatering Wembley meeting between the two new clubs who are both in their first season.

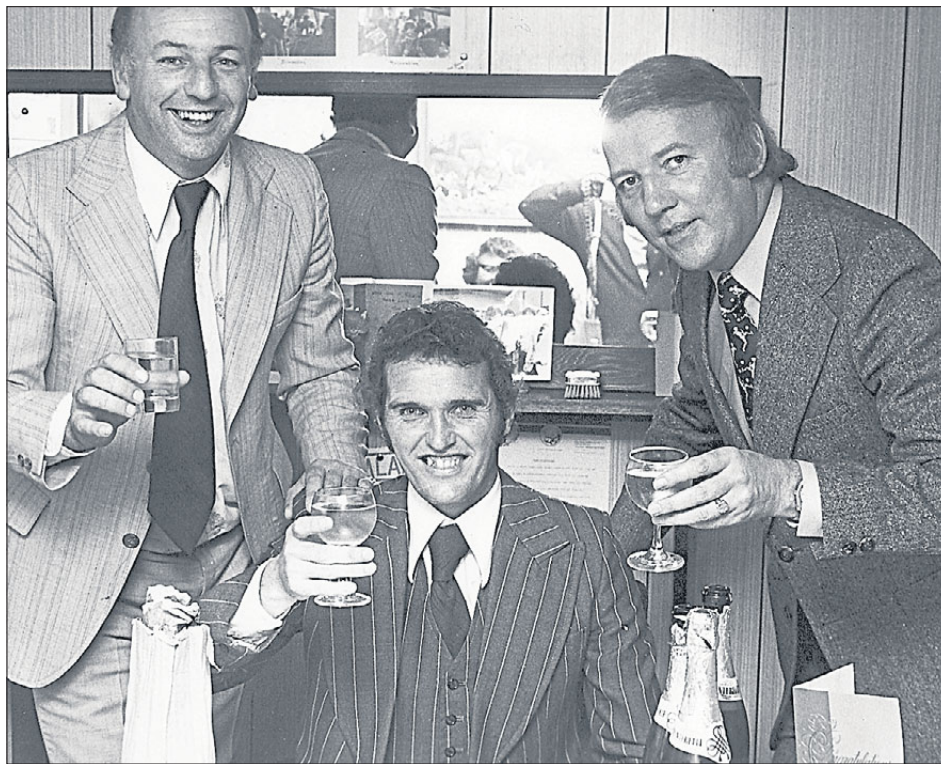
Hereford are favourites to lift the FA Vase, but Salisbury are still in the tournament as well.

Steve Claridge's side have already beaten two of last season's Vase semi finalists, and no club will fancy being drawn against them.

But first, let us concentrate on Hereford.

Their name immediately conjures up images of Ronnie Radford lashing in a 35-yard wonder goal against Newcastle on an Edgar Street mudbath in 1972.

Rickie George scored a winner shortly after, and the non leaguers had beaten the top flight Toon Army in what remains one of the FA Cup's greatest days.



Terry Paine signs for Hereford in 1974.



Robbie Reinelt scores for Brighton at Edgar Street in May 1997 – the goal that relegated Hereford from the Football

League in three seasons. Obviously helped by the publicity earned from slaying Newcastle, Hereford were elected to the Football League later that year.

They were promoted from the old Fourth Division in their first season and by the start of the 1976/77 campaign had reached the Second Division.

Dell legend Terry Paine had joined the Bulls in 1974 and was to make 111 appearances for the club

in three seasons.

Their stay in the second tier – including two games against Lawrie McMenemy's FA Cup holders – was to last just one season.

Hereford would never again climb to such exalted heights.

In May 1997, their 25-year spell in the Football League ended in dramatic fashion.

They hosted Brighton & Hove Albion on the final day of the season

knowing they had to win to stay up. If they didn't win, they would go down.

If they did win, it would be Brighton who would be relegated instead. Most of the media coverage surrounding the game centred on Brighton.

After all, it had been the Seagulls who had once played in the top flight – between 1979-1983 – and who had once reached an FA Cup final

from the ashes...



Hard to believe, but Bournemouth were playing Hereford in a league game as recently as 2010.



Salisbury captain Kane O'Keeffe scores in a Wessex League game at Sholing earlier this season.

(only 14 years earlier, against Manchester United).

An obviously tense encounter ended 1-1, so Hereford dropped back into non league football.

They returned nine years later, through the Conference play-offs, and in 2007/08 won promotion for a second time in three seasons.

Their stay in League 1 was brief – relegated 12 months later – and in 2012 they dropped into the Confer-

ence for a second time.

Two years later, in the summer of 2014, they were expelled from the Conference for financial reasons.

Dropping two divisions into the Southern League, the club's cash problems went from bad to worse.

There was an even a winding-up petition started against them by the club's former manager, one-time Saints striker Martin Foyle.

Hereford United Football Club

were wound up in the High Court in December 2014, and their league record expunged.

Hereford United were no more.

They were not the first former Football League club to nosedive into oblivion.

Chester City, Halifax Town, Newport County, Scarborough and Darlington had all previously gone the same way.

At all those clubs, though, a group

of supporters refused to let football die in their communities.

New clubs were created in all five circumstances, and the same was about to happen at Hereford.

Last February, the Hereford United Supporters' Trust had backed the creation of a new club – Hereford FC.

The Trust agreed a deal with the local council for the phoenix-like outfit to play at Edgar Street, and that enabled the club to apply to the FA to enter a competitive league for the 2015/16 season.

That is how Hereford FC have come to be top of the Midland Premier League.

"Our greatest glory lies not in never having fallen, but in rising when we fall".

That was the motto of the former Hereford United club, and it remains the motto of the new one.

It is an apt slogan, and one Salisbury FC will no doubt admire.

For the Wiltshire club's journey has been very similar, albeit without a famous FA Cup goal from 35 yards and over a quarter of a century of Football League membership to their name.

Salisbury were first chucked out of the Conference in the summer of 2010 for financial reasons, demoted two divisions into the Southern League Premier.

Impressively, the Whites quickly returned to the fifth tier after two promotions in three seasons.

But despite a mid-table finish in the Conference in 2013/14, Salisbury were kicked out again after failing to pay off debts in time.

That led to no competitive football being played in the city at all in 2014/15 – a sad state of affairs indeed.

Salisbury City Football Club Limited was placed into administration on September 18 2014.

In December of that year, the administrators received bids from two consortia for the assets of Salisbury City FC and a five-strong consortium – including ex-Portsmouth player-boss Claridge – were later revealed as the successful bidders.

Among Claridge's consortia colleagues was Ian Ridley, who was Weymouth chairman during Claridge's time as Terras manager in 2003/04.

Like Hereford, the new-look Salisbury FC subsequently set up were now free to enter a league.

Like Hereford, they were admitted to the ninth tier – in their case, the Sydenhams Wessex League.

Like Hereford, they are currently top of their league and facing a much brighter future.

And like Hereford, they seem to have the backing of their local community.

Salisbury have yet to pull in crowds of 4,000, but they did attract a Wessex League record gate of just under 1,500.

No doubt even bigger attendances will follow if the phoenix continues to rise from the ashes.

How England can reach No 1 Test spot

ENGLAND have set themselves the target of becoming the world's number one Test side again after toppling previous incumbents South Africa on home soil.

They sit fifth in the ICC rankings, behind India, Australia, South Africa and Pakistan, following their 2-1 series triumph over the Proteas.

Here, the Sports Pink looks at five things that need to happen if they are to reach their goal.

1. Find an opener: This task has been on England's 'to do' list since Andrew Strauss' retirement in 2012. Alex Hales is the eighth candidate to audition for the role and an average of 17 in four Tests in South Africa hardly makes a compelling case.

2. Keep their key duo fresh: The exhausting nature of the international treadmill means England have encouraged greater separation between their red and white ball squads in the past year. But in Joe Root and Ben Stokes they have two world-class talents who are automatic picks in all three formats.

Paying punters may not always like it but there will be times when both men must be pulled from the front line to avert burnout.

3. Decide what Jonny Bairstow's role is: His batting has never looked



Key all-rounder Ben Stokes

sounder. He scored fluently, showed he can bat through the gears and hit a long-awaited maiden hundred in Cape Town.

But his glove work was a frequent disappointment and he dropped or reprieved key batsmen in all four Tests.

4. Set Bayliss loose on county cricket: Sometimes a fresh pair of eyes can uncover a previously ignored talent. Just ask Duncan Fletcher, who helped make household names of Michael Vaughan and Marcus Trescothick despite relatively modest domestic records.

Head coach Trevor Bayliss has largely deferred to the knowledge of assistant Paul Farbrace and the selection panel given his lack of experience on the county circuit.

5. Focus on spin: If England are to reclaim top spot in the rankings then the five-Test winter tour of India, the new number one side, will be a huge factor.

England won there in 2012, with Graeme Swann and Monty Panesar to the fore. With Swann retired and Panesar currently off the radar, that leaves a huge job ahead of Moeen Ali who is still described by Bayliss as a "work in progress". Adil Rashid and Zafar Ansari are also likely to be part of the equation next time around.

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